

THE SERIAL STORY, ALETHEA'S ORDEAL, BEGINS IN THIS NUMBER.

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"VIVIEN, MY BELOVED, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO ME?" SAID VOLSEN DANE.

PASSING THE LOVE OF WOMAN

NOVELETTE

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

CHAPTER I.

SHE was little and lithe and saucy, and as she came down the busy platform with her friends, more than one man turned to look at her, she was so fresh, so bright, so pretty. She walked with grace that had not an element of pride in it; she held her head erect, and the wintry sun smote full upon the small, slightly-raised face, with its smiling lips and dimpled, yet firm, chin. Her eyes were brown as summer pools in the shade, little curls and waves of chestnut hair escaped from her crimson travelling-cap about

a low, broad brow, and a throat as white and soft as an infant's. Evidently her companions—a middle-aged gentleman and a nice-looking girl—were proud of her, and as evidently sorry that she was leaving them.

"You will come again soon?" pleaded the girl; "the house will be so dull without you."

The other shook her bright head. "I must not expect so long and delightful a holiday again for many months. As it is, you have been so good to me that I am afraid I am quite spoiled for quiet life. I do love this busy London of yours!"

Two men who were standing together turned to look after the little party; they themselves attracted some attention on account of the wonderful difference existing between them. Each was tall, well-proportioned, and muscular; but the one had beauty of the noblest Saxon type, whilst the other's dark skin, close-curling hair, and black eyes

testified to his mixed origin—for he was a mulatto. His companion, turning to him, said—

"Cross, did you ever see a daintier, prettier little creature in your life? I wonder who she is," and as he looked at his friend he saw, to his surprise, that the dusky cheeks were tinged with a most unworldly colour. He laughed a little. "I believe it's a case with you, Cross," he said, with good-tempered sarcasm; "but, take my word for it, it's of no use—a girl like that is bound to have a shoal of lovers."

The other moved uneasily; then he said, in musical voice—

"You are talking utter nonsense, Dane, and you know it; but" (and here a shade of bitterness made itself heard in his tones) "though sprung from a degraded and oppressed race, my instincts are still those of a man, my education that of a gentleman. Why

may I not admire what you find fair?—and she is beautiful beyond any woman I have seen."

"You are a stupid fellow," said Dane kindly. "You make too much altogether of the African side of your case. Why, there isn't a fellow walking the hospital now who can compare with you for sterling merit; and, of course, I was jesting, and quite forgot that your one defect is lack of humour. See, she is getting into our train, and, by Jove! we must make a rush for it, or we shall lose our seats."

"Take your seats, please!" shouted the guard, whilst a lively porter seized upon the two friends' luggage.

"For Edelsworth, gentlemen? This way, please," and, without any scheming on their part, they found themselves hurried into the compartment with the girl who had so attracted their attention. She was the only other occupant besides themselves, and, having bidden her relatives good-bye, had ensconced herself in a corner, and was already deep in the perusal of a popular magazine.

She just lifted her eyes a moment as they entered, then returned to her book, seemingly oblivious of their very existence. They travelled in silence for several miles, the men now and again stealing furtive glances at the proud, sweet face opposing them. Then they came to a little wayside station, and here Volens Dane determined to break all rules of etiquette and address the girl.

"I beg your pardon," he said, courteously, "but I see you have no foot-warmer, and it is very cold. Will you allow me to call for one?"

She looked up, a little startled at first; then she said, gently and gravely—

"Thank you; you are very kind." So, a porter was summoned, a foot-warmer obtained, and, acknowledging Volens Dane's courtesy with a faint smile and another gentle "thank you," the girl returned to her book.

It was very evident she had no intention of conversing with strangers, and the young man dared make no further overtures. If the truth must be told, he felt thoroughly snubbed. Usually the fair sex were very gracious to him, partly because of his pleasant courtesy, principally because of his physical beauty. The remainder of the journey passed in utter silence, but when they were nearing Braybrook, a small station near to Edelsworth, the girl rose and attempted to open the door.

"You wish to get out here?" Volens said, rising too.

"If you please."

"Stay a moment; we shall run the whole length of the platform yet—it is not safe to alight," and he held the door fast until the train came to a standstill; then, springing out, he assisted her to alight. With a gracious little bow and smile, which included Junius Cross, she thanked him, and went to claim her luggage, whilst Volens resumed his seat. They saw her pounce upon by a slight, tall girl, very dark and pretty, and then, as they slowly steamed out of the station, they caught sight of a smart little gig, drawn by a plump pony. The gig contained the two girls.

"I wonder who she is," Volens said. His companion made no answer; he seemed deep in thought. "She is perfectly charming, and, though I was a bit nettled that she would not exchange any unnecessary words with us, I think I like her all the better for her reserve. I hate a gushing girl! Why, Cross, old boy, how quiet you are! Of what are you thinking so profoundly?"

The mulatto turned a somewhat wistful face upon him.

"I was wishing I were as fortunate as you. Do you suppose I ever forget that my mother was my father's favourite slave, and that only a remorseful conscience compelled him to do justice to her son? Not until he lay on his deathbed did he consider my future at all, then he willed that I should come to England. He made, or tried to make of me, a gentleman, and left me a sufficient income to save me

from all fear of want. But could he make this dark skin white? Could he give me a blessed sense of equality with my associates? I should have been happier far as an ignorant, unthinking slave upon his plantation than now I am. With the tastes and education of the white man I have the colour and physique of the black, and the friendship given me is out of pity, not for any merit I possess. What woman of your race would link her life with mine?"

"Pooh!" said Volens, lightly. "You are on a very wrong track indeed; and you think too much of your forebears. You are valued for yourself alone, old boy."

The mulatto leaned forward.

"Wait," he said; "I want to propound a question. Volens, if you had a sister, would you consent to give her to me as my wife? Ah! you need not answer; your silence is more eloquent than speech. The white dove will not mate with the crow."

"Many white women have married men of your race."

"My mixed origin, you mean. I am of no race; I have no country."

Volens Dane looked at his friend in amazement. He had never heard him speak in such a fashion before, although he had guessed something of the hidden depths of his passionate heart.

It was a kindly and not uncourteous face he looked upon, and he felt a genuine pity for Junius.

"Look here, old fellow, I won't listen to such nonsense," he said, in an unconsciously patronising tone. "I wish we had not seen that girl! And why should Mrs. Craig invite you to Lazybank if she did not esteem you as her friend and equal?"

"Leaved her son from a terrible death; she asks me through a strained sense of gratitude. Oh, say no more upon the subject; I am less dense than you believe. And here is Edelsworth, and Allen Craig is waiting us with his tandem."

As they secured their belongings, a young fellow rushed up the platform.

"I say, you fellows, how late you are! I had almost given you up; but, by Jove! I am glad you have come. The mater has arranged the jolliest house-party, and to-morrow we are to have an addition in the way of two awfully pretty girls. Dane, will you drive? Cross, old boy, jump up beside him—for once I'll take a back seat. Jupiter! I am glad to see you; and I can promise you some fine skating. But, I say, I am doing all the talking. Come along; let's get back to the mater and girls as soon as we can."

The young fellow chatted very volubly throughout the short drive. Volens, indeed, had all he could do to manage the horses along the slippery roads, and Junius was never very free of speech.

As they entered the pleasant two-storied house known by the natives as Lazybank, a young girl came running down the drive to meet them. She was the hoyden and pet of the family.

"How glad we are to see you!" she cried. "Mr. Cross, we are going to give you a real old English Christmas, and if you don't find it enjoyable I shall cry myself blind with despair! Mr. Dane, you must forgive me that I overlooked you until now, but we owe Allen's life to your friend. Now, please, come to the house, and rejoice the mater's heart by doing justice to her high tea."

"I say, you fellows, isn't Bees rightly nicknamed Chatterbox?" laughed Allen. "There, run away with Cross, and get the tears over. The mater always cries at the sight of him, because he was fool enough to risk his own life for the sake of your most unworthy servant!"

At the house they met with the warmest welcome. There were a great many people present, and all seemed bent upon making much of Junius; but, in his humility, he thought, "It is pity makes them so kind to

me," and yearned for more of love and less of pity.

Miss Craig, a gentle and sweet-faced girl, took him particularly under her wing. Perhaps she read something of what he felt in his large, dark, pathetic eyes.

"We want to make your visit so pleasant," she said, "that you will wish to repeat it; and Chatterbox, who is clever at such things, has arranged for tableaux vivants and a masked ball. All the Christmas decorations are to be of our own handiwork, and I warn you, Mr. Cross, that we shall press you into our service. Allen says your artistic taste is perfect, and all of us have got to work. We shall only enjoy the after-fun the more. And I have two friends coming to-morrow, who will give valuable assistance. I am sure you will like both of them, but I hope Miss Pomfret will be your favourite, because, although Ruby is very nice, she has not Vivien's depth of character."

So she chatted away, beguiling him out of his gloom, and once or twice Volens was surprised to hear his low voice breaking into laughter. When the little gathering broke up, he said, in his usual humble fashion—

"I can't think why you are so good to me. It must be pity."

"No," the girl interrupted, quickly, "not pity. We admire and love you because you saved Allen for us, and a good man like you deserves reverence and esteem."

Junius went sadly to his pleasant room.

"If I were like other men, women would be less frank and kindly to me," he thought. "I wish to Heaven I had been left in ignorance, then I should never have known how much of sorrow the heart may hold without breaking."

The next day came. It was the twenty-third of December, and the preparations were in full swing for the ordinary festivities. The men had been out skating all day, and on their return were rather bored than pleased to hear of new arrivals.

Junius was first to go down, and as he entered the drawing-room he caught sight of a bright head reclining on a blue cushion, heard a low voice saying—

"The spirit of indolence falls upon me as soon as I enter Lazybank. No place had over so fitting a name as this. I develop into a perfect lotus-eater as soon as I enter these delicious rooms."

He knew the speaker's voice, he saw her face, and then, before his own presence had been perceived, he turned and fled to Volens's room, his face showing pallid through its dark tints.

"Dane, I have seen her! She is here—the girl we met at King's Cross!"

"Take it calmly," said Volens, phlegmatically, although his colour rose a little. "Did she condescend to recognise you? What is her name? What did she say when she saw you?"

"She did not see me. I came up at once to you when I found her there."

"I believe you're afraid of her. Wait a moment, I'll come down with you, and we'll get the necessary introductions over. Curious we should meet her again, and so quickly. Come on, old boy."

Miss Craig saw them as they entered, and, at once addressing them, said—

"The Pomfrets have come. Let us make them known to you," and so led them to where a little group of men were gathered about two girls, the heroine of King's Cross and the dark girl who had met her at Braybrook.

At the sound of Miss Craig's voice the elder turned her head ever so slightly, then, with a little start, she rose, and Volens wondered if she would ignore their previous meeting.

He was not left long in doubt. Before Miss Craig had finished her little ceremony, Miss Pomfret said, with a charming smile—

"We have met before. I have to thank Mr. Dane for his courtesy," and then she made room for them beside her, whilst Ruby

glanced brightly to the quiet man beside her, and inwardly smiled over his shyness.

"This is an unexpected pleasure," said Volens, leaning towards Vivien. "You don't know how much I wondered if I should ever see you again!"

She blushed a little, then said, laughing—
"After all, the world is a very small place, and we are constantly meeting familiar faces in the most unexpected spots. Then there is small wonder you should meet here, as the Craigs are mutual friends, and my home is at Braybrook, a distance of only seven miles."

"Then I may hope to see you often throughout my vacation?" eagerly.

"I do not know," with a return of her reserve. "Ruby and I have promised to return home in the course of a week."

She let her eyes wander then to Junius, who was responding but poorly to her sister's efforts to amuse.

On the dark face, in the depths of the large eyes, there was such an expression of yearning and pathos that her warm heart was touched with pity. Evidently this man's life had not been a happy one.

Her voice was gentler as she said—

"If this is your first experience of an English Christmas, Mr. Cross, it will make you love the season for ever. No one entertains like Mrs. Craig, no one is so kind and motherly to her guests," and then she thought him a little stupid because he answered inarticulately and awkwardly, and she did not guess that already his great dumb heart lay at her feet.

CHAPTER II.

Vivien was sitting on the top of a pair of steps, whilst a bevy of girls stood round putting finishing touches to evergreen wreaths and trails of such flowers as Mrs. Craig's conservatories afforded.

"I am glad we have nearly finished," she said. "I am quite too tired to do more than hang those wreaths. Chatterbox, you are an audacious monkey; you have given prominence to mistletoe in all your work."

"Horridly vulgar plant!" broke in another girl; "it ought to be tabooed. Fancy allowing any and every man the licence to kiss you under it!"

"Oh," retorted Chatterbox, impudently, "that is a good old custom. There's nothing vulgar in it. I like old customs, and adhere to them staunchly. Come, you idle Vivien, make an end of your work! How glad I am the men went skating. They are always such a nuisance when there is anything to be done," she added, with the sage air of an experienced matron.

As she spoke the door of the pretty ball-room opened.

"Volens and his shadow!" murmured Miss Craig, sotto voce, whilst a chorus of voices cried—

"No admission, gentlemen, save on business!"

"We are intent on business," Volens answered, coolly advancing; "we have come to help. Miss Pomfret, I am sure you need assistance."

Quietly and collectedly Vivien came down from her perch.

"Thank you, Mr. Dane; I believe I do. These pictures are a little beyond my reach. You may hang this wreath round this seventeenth century belle, and this melancholy, hothouse youth shall be crowned with berries, by way of contrast. The other wreaths you may dispose of as your taste and judgment dictate."

Then she turned to Junius.

"Mr. Cross, you may make yourself useful draping this ugly door with scarlet bunting. Thanks for relieving us. Girls, we may consider ourselves free," and with a mischievous smile she moved towards the door.

"Ladies," said Volens, ruefully, "we are but novices at this sort of thing. We are willing to work, but we think we are within

our rights when we claim your society as our reward."

"Virtue is its own reward," Vivien answered, with delighted sentimentousness; and then the whole bevy flocked from the room, and for a little while nothing was heard but the clack-clack of high heels, the eddy of light laughter along the corridor.

Volens sat down ruefully.

"Will you label me 'old,' if you please?" he said. "Was ever a girl more provoking? I've half a mind to quit the whole concern; she's certain to discover no end of fault in my work. What do you say, old man? Shall we go on strike?"

"No," answered Junius, with a smile, as he went on with his work; "do your penance with grace. We had no right to invade this room, you know."

"Might is right all the world over," retorted Volens, hanging the wreath all awry about that dead-and-gone belle. "I wonder if all the women of the past were quite as frightful and insipid as the old masters represent them? Just look at this simpering idiot! I should like to know what sort of wife she made." Then he went on with his task a trifle savagely, and upstairs, in Miss Craig's room, the girls were laughing, and having what Ruby called a "pauze dinner."

They were not to dine with the men that day, as they needed all the time they could snatch for rest and making their toilettes.

Presently they all dispersed to their own apartments, and for awhile the house was very quiet.

The Pomfrets were amongst the last to enter the ball-room. Vivien had waited for Ruby, who had spent a most unconscionable time in adorning her pretty person.

She wore crimson and black; Vivien herself was dressed in palest blue, but, in honour of the season, she had fastened a spray of holly berries upon her left shoulder.

If Volens had found her fair before, he thought her doubly so now, and he hurried to her side to secure as many dances as he could before her tablets were filled.

"You owe me some reparation," he said, looking down at her with mock gravity. "Your conduct this afternoon was most reprehensible. You know you got me to work for you under false pretences. The labourer is worthy of his hire."

She interrupted him with a slight gesture of amusement.

"I thought you wished to work for the mere glory of the thing. I did not credit you with any mercenary motives. But as I dislike to lie under an obligation to a stranger, please name the reward you expect."

"I thought you would give me at least three dances."

"You are exorbitant in your demands; I can only give you two—take which you please. Mr. Dane, does not your friend dance? Why does he keep so much aloof?"

"Oh, Cross! Well, you see, poor fellow, he is so awfully sensitive, and wrongly imagines that not a girl in the room would care to dance with him."

"Do you think he would consider me very bold if I offered to do so?" Vivien asked, flushing hotly. "I feel so sorry for him; there is such a hurt look always in his eyes. I should like to convince him that we are not quite the prejudiced creatures he believes us."

"He would not think you bold, but most kind."

"Ah!" impatiently, "that is not what I wish. I want him to feel it quite a natural thing that we should dance together, not an act of compassion on my part. Can you make him understand that?"

"I can try. He waltzes like no other man I know. I am willing to exchange my waltz for any other dance, if you will allow me. Will you?"

"Yes," and again she blushed. "Will you bring him to me now? And please make any

explanation you may think proper to account for my defiance of Mrs. Grundy."

He crossed at once to Junius.

"Old fellow, I want you to do me a favour, and, at the same time, oblige Miss Pomfret. She has given me a couple of dances, one of them a waltz, and you know what a muff I am at that; so I ventured to ask for something else, giving my reason, at the same time telling her you excel in that special performance! Then why does he not dance?" she asked. "Because he has some queer crank about the subject," I answered. Then she paused a moment, and blushed deliciously. Next she said, 'Do you think he would care to supply your place?' Of course, I gave an affirmative reply, so you had best go and scribble your initials."

It seemed to him Junius trembled a little, and he thought he had been wiser not to encourage Vivien's kindly thought for him; but, even as he thought this, the musical spoke.

"She has done this for me out of the goodness of her heart. I am a proud and a grateful man."

Then he went towards her, and she rose, blushing a little, to meet him.

"You are very good to take compassion upon me," she said, smiling. "I dislike to have a waltz spoiled by such a clumsy partner as Mr. Dane describes himself to be."

What reply he made he did not know. He only felt that she was good to him beyond his deserts. And, although he realized that she could never regard him with more than friendship, that night he was almost content it should be so.

So long as he lived he would not forget that dance. The joy of once having her near, being lifted for awhile to her level, allowed to hold her hand and look into the depths of her sweet eyes unreprieved. Afterwards he found other partners, but all the while he thought of her and lived in a happy dream.

Poor fellow! who could deny him that brief spell of joy, seeing that this night was his last happy one on earth?

Volens had his reward, too, after their second dance. Vivien sat with him, talking in a low voice in a desultory fashion. He learned that she and Ruby were motherless. Their only brother was in the army, and the father, a professor of astronomy, was something of a recluse. And, as they talked, suddenly the frosty air was clef by the sound of joyous bells.

"A happy Christmas to you!" Volens said, "and may this not be the last we spend together!" And, before she could reply, young Craig pounced upon them.

"From time immemorial," he said, "it has been the habit to keep Christmas Eve in right royal fashion; so come along, good people. We are going to hold a revel in the servants' hall. There's a steaming bowl of punch prepared for them; and after midnight the water insists all her guests shall join in to amuse them. Hark! there go the carol singers! Columbus! what lungs! and they will be invited in! I hope you are not alarmed at the prospect, Dane!"

"Delighted, I assure you!" and, with Vivien Pomfret on his arm, he followed in his host's wake. It was a pretty and impressive scene. He looked upon the girls in their finery and jewels, making a splendid contrast to the sombre garbs of the men; the maidens, with spotless caps and aprons, with rosy, smiling faces, and eyes dancing with expectation—for it was Mrs. Craig's custom to make each a present on Christmas Eve, and quite in the rear stood the carol singers, clad in fustian, with red "comforters" about their ears and throats.

In the centre of the long table stood the bowl of punch; around it were piles of substantial Christmas fare. Mrs. Craig slowly advanced to the table, supported by Junius on the one side and her son on the other.

"Mr. Cross, will you help me to distribute these little gifts?" she said, blushing as pre-

tily as any girl might do, just a wee bit nervously. Junius gave one after another small packet to her, each of which she presented with a few suitable and kindly words.

Then the punch was ladled out, and everyone, young or old, gentle or simple, must take of it. Afterwards there followed a country dance, which was repeated again, and again to Allen's accompaniment on a concertina. Then came a little pause, and once again Mrs. Craig stepped forward.

"Dear friends," she said, in a gentle, tremulous voice, "it has been granted us once again to meet in the old way, and thank Heaven there is no face absent to-night that smiled here last Christmas Eve. For the sake of the years in which we have known and loved each other, let us sing the old song, and then to bed."

To the surprise of Volsen and Junius, all changed places, so that a man and a maid alternated throughout the ring. Junius stood at Vivien's right, Volsen at her left.

"Join hands," cried Allen, "and sing with all your hearts. Never mind if we do get a bit out of time." And then, as hand clasped hand, Mrs. Craig began to sing, in a weak, tremulous voice,

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot."

And, all in a moment, the song was taken up by guests and servants alike.

What did it matter if some scarcely knew one tune from another? And did it signify that they repeated the first verse of the dear old song because most of them were ignorant of those which followed? The season, the surroundings, had knit them into one loving brotherhood for the while; and when one sweet, wild voice broke into the refrain, "For auld lang syne, my dears, for auld lang syne," was there any who remembered the singer had no part or lot with them, that his face bore the unmistakable mark of a degraded and cruelly oppressed race.

Vivien matched her hand from Volsen's and covered her face, down which the tears were raining, and there was not one there whose heart was untouched, whose eyes were guiltless of emotion. One by one their voices died out, and Junius sang alone, as carried out of himself by enthusiasm that it was not until he reached the concluding stanza he realised what he had done. Then he broke suddenly off, looking round in a shame-faced way.

"I beg your pardon," he said, humbly; "I had forgotten." And, when, half-afraid of her ridicule, he looked for Vivien, she was gone.

"I could not bear it," she said, afterwards, to Ruby. "He sang as I never heard a man sing before." But Allen cried, heartily—

"Bravo, old boy! you excelled yourself! And now, good people, let it be good-night. To-morrow will be a long day."

They all went to church the next morning, Volsen walking beside Miss Pomfret.

"Why did you steal away so secretly last night?" he asked, looking down at her from this great height. "Were the surroundings too barbarous for you?"

"No—oh, no! but—Mr. Cross—oh, you know how he sang, and I am susceptible to music. Then he looked so forlorn and pathetic standing there that I was glad to go away. I felt so sorry for him!"

"You thank a great deal of Cross," jealously. "Is no one else entitled to your pity?"

He spoke so significantly that she turned on him with a little laugh.

"Do you need pity? You seem to me a very fortunate individual."

"Of course, if to be fortunate is to be without a single relative in the world, then I am blessed above most fellows."

"Relatives are often a doubtful blessing. Don't hanker after them, Mr. Dane." She laughed again, and a moment her eyes met his, then she looked away, for she saw something in their blue depths which held her spell.

Without another word they went in to the church, but all through the service Vivien thought of that look, and her heart trembled with a new and vague joy to which she would give no name. They walked home together, and, pausing in the hall, Volsen begged for the faint, sweet exotics she wore. She hesitated, then, detaching the flowers from her furs, she gave them into his keeping, and flew away, just a little angry with herself that he, who had been so recently a stranger to her, should have such power to move her.

In fun and frolic the days went by until a week had gone, and Ruby, who was, as she declared, in love with her surroundings, refused to go home, as Mrs. Craig had so earnestly begged them to stay; and when she wrote to the professor, asking permission to prolong their pleasant holiday, he answered—

"I can spare you both for one week more. I am engaged on a new discovery which will startle all the astronomical world; until it is completed I prefer solitude. Love to you and Vivien, kindest regards to each and every Craig."

So the week stretched into a fortnight, and then, on the eve of their departure, Volsen Dane found Miss Pomfret alone in a little ante-chamber.

"I have been seeking this opportunity for so long," he said, "that I despaired of catching it. Don't go, Vivien; I must speak to you before you leave. My dear, my dear, I love you! I want you to promise that so soon as I can give you a home you will come to me as my treasured wife. Vivien—sweetheart! have you nothing to say to me? Won't you tell me I may hope?"

She was trembling excessively; her face was white, and her lips quivered.

"You have known me so short a time," she said. "Are you quite sure of your own heart?"

"I have been waiting for you all my life. You are the only woman in the world for me. Vivien, my beloved, what will you say to me?"

CHAPTER III.

"I say yes!" she answered, yielding herself to the delight of being so loved; and then he kissed her again and again a little wildly, because he had hardly dared hope so soon to win her. Presently she lifted her face, all rosy and glowing, from his breast. "Volsen," she said, "I do not think it necessary to publish our engagement to all our friends here. We have known each other so short a time, and I am sure the numerous comments upon our—shall we say folly?—would be most embarrassing. Suppose we wait a little, until Mrs. Craig's guests have left here; then we may explain to her."

"That must be as you please, Vivien, though I really see no reason for keeping this a secret. You do not mean I am not to acquaint the professor with my hopes and wishes?"

"Most certainly not; and, of course, I shall tell Ruby, but—but I have such a hatred of publicity in anything, and I want to have my happiness all to myself for a little while. You may see papa to-morrow. It is only seven miles to Braybrook; the trains are frequent; and, even were they not, Allen would gladly lend you a mount. When shall you come over?"

"To-morrow, of course. Do you suppose I could wait longer for the settlement of my fate, or the sight of my little sweetheart? I wonder in what manner your father will receive my proposal?"

"Very calmly and collectedly. Nothing excites papa save the discovery, or fancied discovery, of some comet or planet. We are a very equable race. No, you must not kiss me again—I heard steps outside. Volsen, how impertinent you are! Please—please let me go!" And, with an effort, she freed herself from his embrace, going hastily towards the door, where she was confronted by Allen. "I

am going to dress," she said, quietly, although the colour was high in her cheeks. "What a blessing you have come. Mr. Dane is patetically bewailing his solitude; he is essentially a society-loving man!" And then she slipped by him, and, going up to her room she shares with Ruby, astonished that young lady by bursting into a flood of happy, excited tears, and kissing her in a very abandonment of bliss.

"Oh, you need say nothing," remarked the astute younger sister. "I can guess what has happened. Of course, Volsen Dane has proposed; and equally, of course, you have accepted; but that is no reason why you should make yourself hideous by crying—oh, you silly goose! There, be calm, and I am sure I wish you all the happiness you can desire for yourself. Now, dry your eyes, and let me dress this mass of pretty hair to the greatest advantage."

Volsen, too, confided the news to his nearest friend, Junius Cross. The latter heard in silence, all the while looking from the window by which he stood, so that Volsen could not see his face—that poor, distorted, agonised face, those wild, hopeless eyes, and the mouth, which would quiver, despite all its owner's efforts to keep the line of it unshaken. And when Volsen had made an end of his story, a hoarse-laboured voice said—

"I saw from the first how it would be. Heaven bless you both!"

"Cross!" the other cried, "let me look at you! Why is your voice so strange? Old boy! dear old boy! Forgive me! I did not think—"

"That I should be such a presumptuous fool!" broke in Junius, turning to him with a faint, pathetic smile. "But I could not help myself. From the moment I saw her she drew the very heart out of me. I loved her then, I shall love her till I die! What matter? You have no cause for jealousy, and she has none for sorrow, because, whatever comes, she must never know that I—despised as I am, as I must be—dared lift myself to her level in loving her—dared hope one day it may be permitted me to serve her—and you!"

Volsen stretched out his hand. "Cross, there never was your equal for unselfishness, and I hope to Heaven you will, in time, get over this. I hate to think I have given you such pain to bear, you who have always been my loyal friend!"

"Don't trouble about me; I shall do very well, and I desire nothing so much as to see her happy, to have, now and always, the privilege of her friendship."

They spoke no more on the subject, Volsen having all an Englishman's horror of being thought sentimental, and Junius was naturally reticent with regard to his feelings, believing, in his humility, they would provoke more mirth than sympathy.

The next morning the Pomfrets returned home, and in the afternoon Volsen rode over, and was admitted to the professor's sanctum, where he was courteously, if a trifle absently, received. Mr. Pomfret seemed in no way surprised by his disclosure. It was not the first time Vivien had been asked in marriage, and that by men of greater social standing than the young medical student.

Frankly and briefly, Volsen stated his position. He would not take his degree until the following Christmas, and his small private means would not allow him to marry until he had established a practice. It might be two years before he could offer Vivien a home; and then the professor smilingly said—

"That is quite soon enough to satisfy me; the girl is only twenty, and I don't altogether believe in very early marriages. I am satisfied with the account you have given of yourself, and to be a friend of the Craigs is a patent of respectability. I shall be pleased to see you as often as you choose to call during the remainder of your stay at Lazybank; but remember your next visit must be to us."

And after a long, delicious interview with Vivien, Volsen had left in a state bordering on ecstasy. The dearest girl in all the world belonged to him, and there was not an obstacle in the path of his happiness; surely, in his case, the course of true love was running smoothly indeed. It is true that he and Vivien must soon part for ages (for ages read six months), but what of that? He would have her letters to console him, and he could trust her.

Thinking thus, he rode over to Braybrook on the fifth day of their engagement.

He was unavoidably detained, so that it was growing dark when he reached the professor's house.

The snow had been slowly falling for a good hour, and the sound of his horse's hoofs was muffled and indistinct.

He was thinking of Vivien as he came in sight of the low wicket gate, thinking of her with love and reverence; and there she stood before him, but she was not alone.

He was naturally jealous, naturally suspicious, so there he waited in the shadows, watching and trying vainly to catch the import of her words.

If only he had gone to her then, he might have spared himself and her such misery; if only he had not been so distrustful!

How black her slight figure showed against the back-ground of snow and starlight sky! How earnestly she was speaking, for the faint murmur of her voice was borne to him on the frosty air.

He saw her make an entreating gesture to the man on the other side of the gate, and we who are more privileged than Volsen Dane, may hear what she said—

"Charlie, be honest; tell me all the truth at once; what can I do to help you, unless you are candid with me? I have given you my word to mention this interview to no one until you grant permission. You surely can trust me, dear. I will help you if I can, because I have always loved you, and I do not forget how fearful your mother was for your future."

He was a handsome young fellow of five-and-twenty, but as he stood confronting her, he looked indescribably mean and cringing. The eyes, fine in shape and colour, were shifty, the small flat mouth, shaded by the fair moustache, was weak beyond question, yet Vivien looked at him with love, and her voice was full of pity as she spoke.

"Charlie, dear, hide nothing from me; you know that if I can help you I will."

"I'm a poor, unfortunate devil," he said, with weak self-pity and scorn. "I am always in a mess; but if you get me out of this, old girl, I'll swear never to play the fool again."

"Charlie! Charlie! you have promised that so often, and so often broken your promise."

"I shan't this time, and look here, Vivien, I am going to make quite a clean breast of the matter. The fact is I've been going the pace tremendously, and my allowance, you see, is too small; the governor should never have let me enter the army if he meant to be so stingy."

"Hush!" the girl said, sternly; "you know that we are not rich, and many men would consider your pay and allowance combined quite a fortune. I cannot hear one word against my father."

He looked inclined to resent her speech, but he needed her help too badly to offend her, so he swallowed his anger and said—

"Don't be rough on a fellow; you can't tell what misery I have endured. Vivien, I've deserted!"

"What! Oh, Charlie! What misery is this?"

"Don't cry out like that; it's the truth, and what is done can't very well be undone. You must help me out of the country—because you have not heard the worst yet—and you must not tell the old man until I am away, for he would as soon give me up to justice, as he would a stranger."

"Justice!" the girl, echoed. "Oh, Charlie, what have you done?"

"Well, you see," self-excusingly, "I was decidedly hard up; I had debts of honour to discharge, and no means of discharging them; then I knew, too, how useless it would be to apply to the governor, and so I—I helped myself to the cash entrusted to me. Great Heavens, don't look like that!" (as Vivien fell back against the overshadowing tree), "you don't suppose I meant to keep it; I am not a common thief, and I hoped to pull off a good thing over some races we had arranged. It's like this, Vivien. As captain, I was entrusted with a lump sum, which I was to pass on to the colour-sergeant, to discharge all that was due to the men. I was supposed to see it paid away; but that was not really necessary, and hoping to pull off a good thing, I laid out the cash in bets, and I chose the wrong horse, that is all!"

"All!" the girl ejaculated. "Oh, Charlie! that I should live to call you a thief!"

"For Heaven's sake, don't play the pious rôle; but help me to get away, and, perhaps, the governor can hush matters up so that nothing is known here. How much can you let me have, Vivien?"

"To-night? Only two pounds, but I will get you more. See here, Charlie, take all I have, and go at once to Nurse Amherst. You will find her at the old address at Islington. No one will think of looking for you there; and until I come you must lie in strict hiding. And now go—go! Oh, you poor, unhappy boy—go!"

"I can just catch the up train," he said, accepting the money tendered. "And you'll come as soon to my rescue as you can? And on your oath, Vivien, you will keep my coming a secret until I am safely out of the way?"

"For our mother's sake! Now wish me good-bye, and go. Oh, Charlie! oh, Charlie! what shame you have brought upon yourself and us! There! not for worlds would I reproach you. Good-bye—good-bye!" She threw her arms about his neck; she kissed him, whilst the watcher in the shadows almost cursed her in his heart. "It may be days before I can join you," she said, tremulously. "We must risk no discovery, but I will come as soon as I can. And until then, trust me, be careful to obey my wishes. Good-bye, good-bye!"

"Good-bye! There is something else left to tell you."

"Not anything worse?" in an agony of fear.

"I don't know. It just depends on the way you look at it," the young man answered, airily, and lightly kissing her, he went hurriedly towards the station.

There was murder in Volsen's heart as he sprang from his horse, making as though to follow that retreating figure. And yet why should he ruin all his life for a faithless woman's sake? Was she worth a regret, this girl who had doubtless lovers by the score, this girl whom he had so foolishly entrusted all the joy of his future?

She was still looking after that retreating figure when the sound of horse's hoofs on the snow made her turn quickly, and her face, though pale, grew radiant at sight of man and beast.

"You, dear Volsen!" she said. "It is so late I hardly hoped that you would come to-day."

"I was not too late, Miss Pomfret, to witness your very affecting parting with the lover who probably believes in you as I believed."

Her face changed in a moment; every little soft line and dimple seemed to leave it, and her eyes grew hard.

"What do you mean?" she asked, coldly.

"I mean that you are not worthy of the love and trust I have reposed in you. If you can by any means clear yourself, do so now."

"Wait" (her voice was all shaken and grieved). "I will explain later on."

"If you are innocent you can explain now," he answered, harshly.

"That is just what I cannot do. Volsen, won't you be patient with me a little while? In a day or two—"

"Because I love you and wish to trust you, I will wait until to-morrow for your explanation, though I think I am a fool for conceding so much. If by the given time all is not made clear, I consider myself absolved of every promise made you."

She threw back her head.

"Let it be so. In nothing have I wronged you. Fortunately, our engagement is too new to be known to many. If we must part, each will be spared much—much embarrassment. For the rest, you shall hear from me before to-morrow noon."

He loved her wildly, and so he made one passionate effort to wrest the truth from her.

"Vivien, tell me all now. If this is some foolish, early entanglement I can find means to rid you of the fellow, and I will try to forget as I will forgive your deceit. For my love's sake, keep nothing from me."

"I will tell you all later, Volsen; now I am bound to secrecy. Oh, will you not trust me even as I would trust you through good or ill report?"

"Do you think I am a fool?" he answered, roughly. "Though I love you with all my strength, I would tear out my heart rather than marry you, distrusting you as now I do. The woman who will hold back such a secret from her lover will make but a deceitful wife."

How white she was, how bitter the curve of her mobile mouth.

"I am sorry we ever met," she began, slowly, and he interrupted as quickly:

"Heaven knows I wish I had never seen your face! You have made life a curse to me!"

Then all the hot blood flamed into her face, and her eyes flashed scorn at him.

"I will not listen to such words a second time," she said, in a low, unnatural voice. "I give you back your ring now, and with it every promise that you made. You are absolutely free, and when next you go a-wooing I hope you will be more sure of your fiancée's faith than you have been of mine!" Then, with a bitter laugh, she turned and fled.

CHAPTER IV.

"Isn't it strange," said Ruby, two days later, "that Volsen has not been over. One would think you had quarrelled."

The professor looked up quickly as Vivien, white-faced and heavy-eyed, answered:

"No we have. There is no engagement between us now."

"My dear," he said, "you cannot really mean this. I hope not. There is nothing does a girl more harm than a broken engagement."

"Pooh," retorted Vivien, lightly, though Ruby saw her lip tremble, "so few are cognisant of the fact that it cannot signify much. Mr. Lane wanted to be the controller of my thoughts and actions alike, and I was hardly prepared to give up all freedom before marriage. Don't look so vexed, father. No one is hurt by the rupture, and I am glad we discovered our mistake in time."

You should be more sure of knowing your mind," he retorts, gathering up his books and departing.

Then Ruby went to her sister's side.

"There is more in this than appears on the surface," she said. "Vivien, have you nothing to tell me? Why have you and Volsen quarrelled?"

"You will know soon enough. To-night I will tell you all; and, Ruby, I must run up to town this morning, and I want you to say nothing about my going to papa until luncheon. It is my secret, and I told you bound to respect it. There, say no more; I am not to be betrayed into confidences!"

She talked all the while in a low, hard voice. There was an unnatural glitter in her brown eyes, and a bright spot of excite-

ment burned on either cheek. Ruby looked at her in wonder.

"You are very mysterious," she said, petulantly, "and I hate mysteries of any kind."

"Not more than I," answered Vivien, as she went away to make her few preparations, coming down presently with a small black hand-bag, which seemed somewhat heavy. "Good-bye, Ruby," she said, and, passing out of the house, made her way to the station.

The up train had just run in from Edelsworth, and as Vivien passed down the length of the platform one man looked out after her. "Jove, Cross, it is Miss Pomfret, and she is going alone to town. What can it mean? I swear I'll not lose sight of her until I have discovered what it is I wish to know!"

Junius, who was looking scarcely less worn than his companion, answered:

"It seems unworthy of you to follow and watch her, as though you were a detective and she a criminal. I tell you, Dane, you are wronging her cruelly, and laying up a store of misery for yourself."

Volsen looked incredulous, and the remainder of the journey passed in almost utter silence. Alighting at King's Cross, he said:

"Do you come with me, Junius?"

"No; not on such an errand."

"Then see to my luggage, there's a good fellow. I will not lose sight of her!"

The little figure was still before him, the crimson travelling cap making quite a bright speck of colour among the neutral tints around.

Vivien called a cab. Volsen followed suit, telling "cabby" to keep the first vehicle in sight, no matter where it went.

They passed through noisy streets until they came to narrower thoroughfares, when, to Volsen's surprise, the first cab stopped, and stepping out, after one swift glance round, Vivien entered a shop decorated by three gilt balls.

The watcher drew his breath sharply.

"What could it mean? Why must she resort to such means to raise money? What difficulty or disgrace had brought her so far from home on such an errand?"

After a long time she reappeared, looking white and nervous; and, having given some instructions to her Jehu, was driven away wholly unconscious that she was followed.

Through more narrow and dirty streets they went, on and on, until they reached a squalid row of houses. At the neatest and cleanest of these Vivien stopped, and as Volsen lifted his eyes to an upper window he saw the face of a handsome, haggard young fellow appear.

He gave a start as his eyes fell upon the dainty figure alighting from the cab, and having waited until Vivien had dismissed the man, ran down and opened the door to her.

Volsen saw her stretch out her hands to him. There were tears in her eyes, on her cheeks. Then the door was gently closed, and he, cursing her in his heart, gave directions to be driven to his chambers.

This, then, was the woman he loved, whose life was a foul lie, whose smiles and glances had been as false as those of Delilah. She had a lover in hiding, a lover who was not too proud to live upon her bounty.

"Great Heaven!" he groaned; "she had better have died than lived to show me the awful depths of deception to which a woman can descend!"

He found Junius alone, already engaged in work. He glanced up as Volsen entered; but he did not speak. His face had a very troubled look which deepened as his friend tossed his hat into a corner, and throwing himself into a chair said, bitterly—

"It's all up with me, old boy. With my own eyes I have seen her folly and wickedness. Let her go, she never cared for me!"

And then he told his story in a heart-broken, reckless fashion, whilst Junius listened, the pathetic look deepening in his large, dark eyes.

"Well," said Volsen, at the conclusion, "what have you to say now in her behalf?"

"This, Dane, I will not believe your evidence against her. It is purely circumstantial. Oh! why could you not wait for her explanation?"

"Because I did not intend she should have time to plan some new plot the further to deceive me."

"One day you will be sorry that you so sorely misjudged her. I will stake my honour on her truth and purity; not all the world should teach me distrust of her. I would give my life if need were to save her from unhappiness."

"I do not understand such love," Volsen answered, coldly. "Clearly she has sinned against me until forgiveness is impossible. Let her go; I am weary of women and their ways. Henceforth science is all to me, love is nought."

In the meanwhile, in that little upper room, sat Vivien and her companion.

"I thought I could have brought you more," she was saying; "but though I sold all my jewellery, I realised only twelve pounds. You will have to make that do for a time. You can travel third class to New York, and there you must wait until you hear from me. To-night I must tell papa all, and though he will be furiously angry with you, I am sure he will not refuse you assistance; he is too proud of his name to let it be trampled in the mire. And oh, Charlie! oh, Charlie, you will try to lead a straight life now, for our sakes and your own!"

"I'll try, upon my honour I will," the young fellow answered, half-earnestly. "I wish I had never gone into the army—it has been my ruin. I meant to go along all straight, but you know what a poor fellow I am, and upon my soul I never meant to steal. I only took the money as a loan; I wanted it for her."

"For her!" ejaculated Vivien, "I don't understand you, Charlie."

"Probably not" grimly. "The fact is I am married; was married six months ago."

"Oh, Charlie!" faintly, "and who is she? Any one we can possibly recognise?"

"She is the handsomest girl in the kingdom, and I love her with all my soul. I couldn't bear to see the other fellows dashing after her, and so I proposed, and she accepted me. I took a nice little place just outside Rochester for her, and I was always meaning to write the governor about the step I had taken, but somehow I never had the courage. And then tradesmen began to be troublesome, and at last I got so worried, I—I made the mistake I told you of. It will be rough on Kate, but for my sake you will help her. Surely my father would not let my wife starve; and when once I've found work over there, I'll send for her. You'll go to see her, Vivien? By now she knows the news, and she will go mad with anxiety about me. You will be kind to her?"

"If I can," gravely. "But, Charlie, has your wife no friends?"

"Friends, but not relatives. She was barmaid at 'The Salisbury.' You need not look so scared. There isn't a handsomer or better girl than my Kate. Do your best for her, Vivie, and you shall never regret your kindness."

"I will do what I can; and now, Charlie, let us get ready for your journey. Nurse Amherst had put your things together, but it would be best if you could change your appearance a little. You must sacrifice your moustache, that will make a wonderful difference in you. And oh, Charlie! Charlie! for our sakes try to lead a new life in a new land; do not let us always suffer shame because of you."

A little later she bade him a heart-breaking good-bye, and then she called a cab and was driven swiftly to the station, for she had but little time in which to catch her train.

The journey to Braybrook seemed never

ending, and yet she dreaded to reach home, knowing too well what cruel tidings she carried with her.

There was no one to meet her at the station, and she walked swiftly home, not afraid of the darkness because her whole heart was full of sorrow and shame.

There were lights in the drawing-room, and thither she went, to find Ruby dissolved in tears, and the professor poring over a letter with a set stern face.

"Oh, Vivien!" cried her sister, "we have awful news for you; never anything so terrible has happened before to us. Charlie has deserted—and he is a thief!"

The weary girl sank into a chair.

"I have known it three days now. He came to me for help, and I have been to him to-day. Father, he is your own son, your only son, you must not be hard on him. He bound me by a promise to say nothing to you until he was out of England—he has already set sail."

"This, then, is why you went to town?" questioned the professor, harshly.

"Yes; blood is thicker than water, and when Charlie was young, he was good to me."

"And may I ask," continued her father, "by what means he possessed himself of money to leave the country?"

"I sold my jewellery," she answered, shame-facedly. "It scarcely realised what I expected, but he has sufficient to carry him away. And, oh, papa, you will not refuse to give him a little sum with which to start a new life?"

"I will not refuse that, but I make it a condition that he shall never return to England, where he has publicly disgraced us, nor will I ever see him again."

"Father, he is our very own. If we do not show him mercy, who will?"

"He deserves to suffer," cried Ruby; "he has been a trouble and an expense to us always."

"But if we turn against him," began Vivien, when her father interrupted quickly:

"He has no part or lot with us; still being my own son, I will not suffer him to want. You shall forward him a substantial cheque, Vivien, and make him understand that it is the last remittance he will ever receive from me; that I never wish to see or hear of him any more, that he is as one dead to us."

"Father, you must have patience a little longer; I have not told you all. Charlie is married. He says his wife is good and beautiful, and prays we will assist her until he can send for her. Her name is Kate Ayers, and she was barmaid at 'The Salisbury.'"

"Worse and worse; what in the name of Heaven are we to do?"

"We can't leave her to starve!" said Vivien, weakly.

"And we won't have her here," cried Ruby. "Papa, you had better let Vivien run down to see her to-morrow, and make some arrangement with her. Ten shillings a week should be a sufficient allowance for such a person."

It struck Miss Pomfret that all the unpleasantnesses of the affair were being thrust upon her; but she made no demur. She had given Charlie her word to help him and his wife; she was not the girl to go back upon a promise.

"I am not a rich man," the professor said, in a melancholy tone, "and I have your future to consider, girls; beyond forwarding—my—your brother a cheque, and paying this shameful deficit in his accounts, I will do nothing for him. As to his wife, I will allow her the sum Ruby mentions, for the space of a year, subject to these conditions: that she never seeks to obtrude herself upon us, that she never claims any relationship with us. If, at the end of twelve months she has not joined her husband I shall cease my allowance, which, under the circumstances, I consider most liberal. To-morrow, Vivien, you can go to her place, Keziah can accompany you."

"I need no protection," coldly, "and, papa, won't you let me send Charlie one little word of kindness, some message of forgiveness?"

"He is no longer my son," harshly, "from to-day he is dead to me—and to you all."

Heavily the girl went to her room; she was wearied out by grief and excitement, and could not sleep. She had lost her lover, her brother was an outcast, and those remaining of her household had neither sympathy with nor compassion for her. She buried her face in her pillows, but she did not weep—crying always exhausted her, and she had a long day's work before her, and she wondered vaguely what manner of woman Charlie had chosen for his wife, and if her goodness really equaled her beauty. Before the close of another day all these questions would be answered.

"Oh, Charlie! Charlie!" she sobbed, under her breath. "I am glad our mother never lived to know your shame; I am glad she believed in you to the very last."

When she got downstairs there was a letter beside her plate, and the hot blood rose to her cheeks as she recognised Volsen's handwriting. What had he to say to her? Was he grieved now at the unjust measure he had meted to her? Was it to be reconciliation between them. Ah! even the first words killed the new-born hope in her heart.

"For two days I fought with my love for you. I longed for you, I was ready to kneel at your feet and pray your forgiveness. But on the third morning I travelled to town by the ten fifteen train, and I saw you enter at Braybrook. I determined to satisfy myself as to your movements. I followed you from King's Cross to Holythorn Street, where you entered a pawnbroker's, from thence I followed you to Blindman's Lane, and saw you keep an assignation with some man unknown to me. You will admit I have not judged you without sufficient evidence of your duplicity. It is not likely we shall meet again, so let me here say that I will try in the far future to forgive the wrong you have done me, though Heaven knows you have spoiled my whole life, and degraded your womanhood by your base deception."

"VOLSEN DANE."

She crushed the letter in her hand, her lip quivered, and she seemed about to fall, but seeing Ruby's curious glance, she gasped, laughed, and tossed the cruel epistle into the fire.

"More heroics," she said, carelessly, "how insufferably they bore me. Now, Ruby, we must ascertain what time my train starts."

CHAPTER V.

Miss Pomfret, heavy at heart, and worn out by the events of the few past days, travelled alone to Rochester, once more carrying the little black bag, in which were sundry documents Kate Pomfret was to sign before she could draw the allowance the professor intended making her. She was so wrapped up in her own troubles, with thoughts of Charlie and Volsen, that she was all but unconscious of the half-insolent, wholly admiring glances cast at her by the officers loitering in the streets, and it was not until one more bold than the rest, advancing, spoke that she started from the reverie into which she had fallen. He was a good-looking young fellow, carrying himself with an air of importance, and his companions watching, smiled to think what would be the denouement.

"I beg your pardon," Vivien said, in clear, distinct tones, "you spoke?"

"I begged permission to accompany you," he began, a little cowed by her manner.

She looked quietly into his face, she measured his height with her brown eyes quite steadily and cold.

"You may carry my bag, provided that your charge is not excessive," she said, and drew out her purse, "will you be paid in advance?" and that foolish young officer

was glad to shrink away and leave her unmolested. But she gave him a legacy; so long as he remained in that regiment he was known by the sobriquet, "The Tout."

Vivien went on her way rejoicing, and a little outside of Rochester she came upon a cottage which in summer must have been a pretty place, but just now it wore a forlorn look, and the girl's heart failed her a little as she rapped at the door. A neat maid instantly responded, and in answer to Vivien's inquiries for her sister-in-law, led the way to a prettily furnished room.

As she entered its only occupant rose to greet her. She was a handsome brunette, probably five years her husband's senior, and she was beautifully dressed in black silk, profusely trimmed with jet.

"I beg pardon," she said, affectionately, "I think I have not the pleasure of knowing you."

She was Charlie's wife, and Vivien's heart was sore for her and Charlie, so with a deprecating gesture she put out her hand.

"I am Vivien Pomfret," she said, "and I have come from Braybrook to see what can be done for you."

Kate would not see the extended hand. Sinking into a chair, she said, sulkily and with lowering brow,—

"You know then that your precious brother has done? He promised to make me a lady, instead I am a felon's wife—I, who might have married almost where I chose. But for his false tongue and specious tales I should now be landlady of 'The Salisbury.'"

Vivien's heart sank within her, but remembering how bitter her father and Ruby were against Charlie she would not yet condemn his wife. She was doubtless sure yet with the sense of his desertion and the shame he had brought upon her.

"It has been a terrible blow to us all," she said, very gently. "It must have been doubly so to you. But I hope there are better times in store for you. I have seen Charlie, and he expressed his intention to send for you at the earliest possible date. He spoke of you with love—"

"Wait a moment, Miss Pomfret. Do you mean to tell me he has left England?"

"He was obliged to."

"And he talks of roughing it in the colonies? They all do that. Those outlandish places are sinks of iniquity, and if Charles Pomfret thinks for a moment I am going to bury myself alive, and work like a slave, because he has chosen to make a fool of himself he is very much mistaken."

The brown eyes bent upon her were growing very scornful, and yet the girl controlled herself sufficiently to say still gently,—

"You cannot mean you will forsake your husband? I pray you to remember the promises you made him before Heaven."

Kate laughed amusedly.

"We were married at the Registry Office, because we wanted to keep the affair dark. There isn't much solemnity about that. Tell me what does the old man, your father, intend doing for Charlie?"

Poor Vivien burst into tears.

"He has promised to give him a cheque for a hundred pounds."

"Yes, and when that is gone? Charlie Pomfret will never look for work whilst he has full pockets, and when he looks for it he won't get it. You don't suppose I am going away from all my friends to enjoy such a prospect as that? Flatly, Miss Pomfret, I refuse to see or communicate with my husband. And I should like to know how I stand with regard to you and my new papa?"

Vivien calmed herself sufficiently to answer:

"I have papers here which he wishes you to sign. We are far from being rich people, and I do not think my father is ungenerous to offer you ten shillings weekly throughout the first year of Charlie's absence. That will give him time to get you a home—"

"Ten shillings!" interrupted Kate, fiercely.

"Do you suppose I can live on such a beggarly pension? As it is, I am to lose my home—everything is to be sold, for nothing is paid for that Charlie could get without cash. Ten shillings! You must be mad to insult me! And am I not to be received at Braybrook? Do you mean to make an out-cast of me?"

"My father simply refuses to see you."

"Well, I'm not anxious to make his acquaintance," with a scolding laugh. "I am not proud of the connection, I can assure you. I came of honest folks. We never had a thief in our family to my knowledge. And you need not think I shall be at any pains to hush up this scandal. I've my own good name to think of. Are you sure your father said ten shillings only? Won't he go another five?"

"I am sure he will not," said Vivien, coldly. "You cannot expect that he would, knowing, as you do, that but for my brother's foolish infatuation for you he never would have fallen so low."

"Thank you. You can bite, I see, for all your meek looks and ways. Where is the paper you want me to sign? Is this it? Well, here is my answer," and, with sudden passion, she tore the document into fragments, flinging them into the fire. "Go back and tell your father I won't have his charity, that I shall return at once to my old life, that his son is as one dead to me, but that when people grow curious about me I shall tell them my husband's shameful story, and proclaim my relationship to the illustrious Professor Pomfret. Do you understand? Yes! Then go, and never communicate with me unless to send me the joyful news of my release."

She looked so awful standing there with that demonic anger on her handsome, distorted face, her eyes burning with a lurid light, that Vivien was not sorry to escape from her presence.

"Oh, Charlie! Charlie!" she moaned, as she went down the quiet road, "what possessed you to marry her? You are yoked to a beautiful fiend, and there is no escape for you, my poor boy! my poor boy!"

She made her way back to the station. She had three hours to wait, and, being weary, she fell asleep, and, but that the attendant roused her, she must have missed her train. As it was, the journey was cold, dark, and tedious in the extreme, and, though she had taken a violent chill and was terribly tired, she could not go to bed until she had given a full and particular account of the events of the day.

"A dreadful woman," the Professor said, as she made a conclusion. "One could not possibly know her."

"I am glad she refused the allowance," added Ruby. "I did not like the idea of practising small economies for the sake of such an awful creature."

Vivien rose.

"I really am tired," she said. "You must not object to my saying good-night at such an early hour. I shall be rested and well by the morning."

But in the morning she could not rise. The unspoken grief she endured, the strain, both mental and physical, had proved too much for her, and, for the first time in her strong young life, she was really and seriously ill.

Ruby was very good to her in those days, perhaps her conscience reproached her that she had left all labour and anxiety to the sister whom, in her heart, she dearly loved. And whilst she lay thus prostrate a letter arrived from Charlie in which he said he had reached New York safely, and was anxiously awaiting his cheque. He had met with some kind friends, and hoped soon to send them news of his prosperity. But of Kate he had heard nothing. He was writing her by that mail; for his sake would they be good to her, and then he concluded by fresh protestations of remorse and repentance, and Vivien, who was yet weak and un-

strung, thrusting the letter under her pillow, moaned:

"Oh, Charlie! Charlie! must disillusion always follow love? Poor boy, your fate is harder than mine; for cold and suspicious as he is, he is yet worthy to be loved," and then she hid her face and wept softly for a little while, and in her weeping much of the bitterness of her pain was swept away. Slowly she came back to health and strength, wholly unconscious that Volsen was aware from the first of her illness, and that pride and love alike fought in his heart. Love counselling for the sight of her face, the touch of her hand, pride saying over and over:

"It is not for you to make the first advance, and would you call a woman wife of whose integrity you must ever be doubtful?"

It was Chatterbox Craig who had given him the news, which blanched his face and sent him to his duties like one in a heavy dream. This is what she had written:

"DEAR MR. DANE.—We are beginning to wonder if you and Mr. Cross never intend coming to Edgeworth again? Can't you manage to give up one day (say the twenty-fifth of March, which is Allen's birthday, and always celebrated by fine doings)? You must come, although I am afraid you will be rather disappointed at not seeing Miss Pomfret. She is very ill and has not left her bed for three weeks. She took a chill in some way, and she was so worried at the time about family matters that it had a greater effect than it otherwise would have had. But we hope she is on the road to recovery. I went to see her yesterday, and she looks like the ghost of herself. I could have cried when I saw her. I thought you would like to hear the news, although they are sad, because rightly or wrongly I always fancied you liked Vivien very much. Please answer this at your earliest leisure, and accept for yourself and Mr. Cross the kindest wishes of CHATTERBOX."

Volsen did answer that letter, refusing the invitation proffered himself and Junius. He longed to go to Edgeworth, but wisdom forbade.

"A burnt child dreads the fire," he thought, "and if I saw her weak and ill, I should most certainly succumb to her, and doubting her, I never should know an hour's happiness," so after the mental regrets, he ended, "As you suspect mademoiselle of the keen eyes, I like and admire Miss Pomfret, and I should be glad if from time to time you would report her progress towards recovery. I am not sufficiently intimate with the family personally to inquire."

Chatterbox grimaced horribly over the conclusion of this sentence.

"After all," she said, talking to herself, a habit she had, men are poor creatures, and afraid to say what they mean. He 'likes and admires her,' then why doesn't he tell her so? Or why not speak the honest truth? 'I love you!'"

But despite her indignation she kept him duly acquainted with Vivien's state, finally writing—

"Miss Pomfret is about again; but I can't tell you how much she has changed. She has lost all her merry ways, and looks so weak and ill; but she does not complain. And I am sure she is worried dreadfully. They have had a lot of trouble lately with her brother, but this would not interest you, and I shall say no more about it. If nothing happens to disturb our plans we intend spending the summer in town. The Pomfrets are going too, if Vivien's health permits."

Should he see her? was the question which agitated him. If he had been more patient was it possible she could have explained all that was so suspicious, in a satisfactory way? Was it too late yet? Then he remembered how scornfully she had returned his ring and with it all the vows he had made, and he hardened his heart against her. Yet he was profoundly miserable. Her face for ever

haunted him. He yet heard the echo of her gay laughter and merry speeches.

"I loved her," he said again and again to himself, through those long night watches he now so often kept. "She was the breath of my life, and she deceived me. Sometimes I wish I had poor old Junius's simple faith and trust. I should be a happier man, and it is hard that because she has wronged me a cloud should grow up between us. We are not the friends we once were."

In May the professor took his daughters to town, making their home with the Marshalls, the friends in whose company Volsen had seen Vivien first, and loud were their exclamations at the change in her. Her bright beauty was dimmed, her eyes were sad and weary, and even her voice seemed changed. They attributed all this to her sorrow and anxiety concerning Charlie, and were very pitiful to her in ways and words, allowing her to come and go as she wished.

She liked best to frequent museums and picture galleries before the fashionable world was abroad, and there she would sit dreaming over her spoilt life, her dead hopes, and rejected love. She thought often, too, of Charlie; she was the only member of the family who communicated with him, and when he wrote, asking news of Kate, she softened those cruel speeches, hoping against hope that she would yet have compassion on him; praying him to be patient with her, because naturally she was hurt that he had left her behind to battle with his creditors, and to take up the old life, when she had so fondly believed she was henceforth to revel in luxury.

One morning, when she had been in town a week, she received a letter from Charlie in which he wrote hopefully of his prospects. He had obtained a situation as corresponding clerk; the salary was not large, but it would be sufficient for his wants and Kate's; and the remainder of the money with which his father had supplied him, he had spent in furnishing a small flat. He was writing Katey by the same mail, and how anxiously he should wait her reply surely Vivien would guess.

She was afraid she knew what answer the wife would send, and her heart was heavy for her brother's sake. She must think these things over in quiet; so, dressing, she went out and towards St. Paul's Cathedral.

CHAPTER VI.

It was quite early when she reached the Cathedral; a service was just ended, and very few of the worshippers lingered behind. She chose a seat in a remote corner, and gradually, as the solemnity, the restfulness of that holy place fell upon her, her troubles seemed to grow less, and a great calm stole over her. She sat so long that other worshippers came in, and once more the soft strains of one of Palestrina's anthems began to flood the whole place with wonderful and divine melody. Then someone came in and sat beside her. She did not turn her head until a smothered exclamation of surprise broke from a man's lips. She turned quickly to look at him and saw Junius Cross. A little, faint smile curved her lips, in answer to his astonished gaze; then both remained quiet until the service ended. Then he, with some embarrassment, offering his hand, said—

"I did not think to meet you here, Miss Pomfret; do you come often?"

"Yes; I seem to find rest here. One is quite away from the world, though so near it. Shall we walk round, or are you tired of the statuary?"

"I should never be that if I came here every day for a score of years."

His dark eyes were looking down on the sweet, pale face, with a tender solicitude in their depths.

"I am afraid you have been very ill," he said.

"Oh, I am quite recovered now; I am only paler than I used to be."

He took her hand in a gentle, friendly clasp.

"Then what is troubling you? Will not you confide in me? Maybe I could help you."

"You are very good, but no one can do that. We have had heavy sorrow at home, and it lies upon my heart yet. I think I can never be glad again!"

"You are so young to say that," his voice tremulous with his eagerness to comfort her.

"Misery is not reserved for the old," she answered, a touch of bitterness in her tone. Then suddenly, whilst the blood flushed into her cheeks, and her long lashes veiled her eyes, "Do you often see Mr. Dane now? Are you sworn friends still?"

"We still share the same chambers, and are friends, but there is a sense of constraint between us since the rupture of your engagement. You see that never for a moment could I doubt you."

"Thank you," she answered, gently, "and Mr. Dane—is he well and happy?"

"He is well, but he cannot be happy, Miss Pomfret. Cannot this unhappy misunderstanding be explained away? Will you not entrust me with some message to Dane? I cannot bear that pride should spoil your life and his."

"Mr. Cross, you are good so to interest yourself on my behalf; but I will not play the suppliant and so confess myself in the wrong. Never by thought or deed did I give him occasion for offence—I will swear that, I begged him to have patience with me for two days—only two days—and I would explain all that seemed strange. He loved me so weakly that he would not trust me even for so short a time. If whilst our engagement was so new he could so doubt me, to what suspicion should I have been subjected when once I was his wife? We are better—far better—apart."

"No," said Junius. "No; without each other your lives are broken and incomplete. Let me be the mediator between you; I desire nothing so much as to spend my life in your service."

She was deaf to the love in his voice, though not to its kindness.

"You ask an impossible thing," she said, gently. "Pray pursue the subject no further."

"But one question more. If he came to you of his own accord would you condone his offence? You love him still, and love is merciful."

"If he comes to me believing he has wronged me, I will freely forgive him and bury the past; but he will never do that. Oh, yes!" a little wildly. "Oh, yes, I love him with all my heart. I always shall. I don't know why it is I say these things to you—perhaps because I know you are sorry for me, and that I may trust you unreservedly; but you must remember that I will allow of no mediation. If you so lower me as to plead my cause with him, I never would clasp your hand again in friendship, or forgive your offence. I am a proud woman, and of late a bitter one!"

"But, where love once hath been pride dieth," quoted Junius, sadly.

"That may be true of some natures, not of mine. Shall we go now, Mr. Cross?"

"Yes, if you wish it; but may I not see you again? May I not tell Dane, at least, that I have seen you?"

"You may tell him so much, and if, indeed, you care to meet me again I shall be at the Doré Gallery to-morrow afternoon. Is your way mine? If so, let us go together," and as they passed out into the brilliant sunshine, people turned to look after them.

The fair, pale English girl, with the sorrowful eyes and mouth; the big, stalwart mulatto, whose eyes were alive with pride at being her chosen companion; and Vivien never guessed how every word she spoke and every glance she gave fanned the passionate love in his southern heart into fiercer flame.

"My lady! my lady!" he was saying again and again to himself, "let me prove my love. Let the sacrifice of my life make the happiness of yours!" and he did not guess how very literally in the future that prayer of his would be granted.

For the remainder of that day he went about in a state of exaltation. He had spoken with his lady, and she had been gracious to him beyond his wildest hopes.

Volsen looked at him from time to time with curiosity, and finally in the evening, as they sat together, he said:

"What is it, Junius? You look as happy as a man who has successfully passed his examination, or has unexpectedly come into a fortune!"

The dark face turned upon him was full of pity.

"I saw Miss Pomfret to-day. They are staying in town, and I met her quite alone at St. Paul's!"

Not a word did Volsen utter, but he sat staring out of the window for fully ten minutes. Then he said, slowly,—

"Was she looking well and happy?"

"She was certainly not looking well," answered Junius, diplomatically.

"Did she speak of me? Or did she quite ignore the fact of my existence?"

"She asked precisely the same question concerning you as you did of her."

"No more? She sent me no message? I suppose I am a fool to expect or wish it!"

"She sent no message. But, Dane, if you could see her, you would never doubt her innocence and truth. She could no more sin, as you believe she did, than could the angels of heaven. As you value your happiness, humble your pride and go to her. She will explain all to you if you are gentle with her."

Volsen yawned.

"Probably, but I don't intend being duped a second time; and there are other women in the world as fair as she!"

"Probably, but none can be to you what she was, and must always be."

"Let the subject drop, Cross. We shall never agree upon it, and I won't quarrel with you for a coquette's sake. We have been friends too long, old boy; though we have seemed to drift apart since she came into our lives, and created discord. Jove! how sick I am of work. Let us indulge in a little recreation to-night. Shall we go to the Drury? I hear there is a fine thing on there," and Junius, willing to please Volsen in all things, cheerfully agreed; but his heart was sore for these two lovers, between whom pride and suspicion stood.

Charlie Pomfret sat alone in his room; business was over for the day, and he had come home to find two letters waiting him. The one was from Vivien, the other from Kate. He knew the bold, dashing writing at a glance, and in his heart he said,—

"Heaven be thanked, she has forgiven me, or she would not write!"

With trembling fingers he tore open the envelope and drew out her letter—his wife's letter—and as he read his handsome, haggard face grew yet more haggard, and the hue of death was upon it.

He could not at first comprehend the extent of his misery or her cruelty; but it came to him slowly, slowly, in all its naked horror.

"You have asked me to join you, to drag out a pitiful existence on your meagre income, you who have wronged me in every possible way. You must be mad to imagine I am such a fool as to resign my present comfort for the sake of a thief and contemptible coward. I don't care what promises I made you when I thought you an honourable gentleman. I hold myself absolved of them. I hope I shall never look on your face again, your memory has grown so loathsome to me; and I should be glad if in future you will refrain from reminding me of your existence. This is the last time I shall reply to you, and I can only say in conclusion, it would be better for me and those connected with you if you were dead!"

With an awful sob he brought his arms down on the table before him, and bent his tortured face upon them.

This was the woman he had loved, for whose sake he had sinned and suffered, for whose sake he had lost honour and reputation, and made himself an exile from his home.

"I hope I shall never look upon your face again," he repeated, dully, and then again and again, "It would be better for me if you were dead! Oh, Kate! oh, Kate! you shall have your wish, and may Heaven forgive you!"

He did not read Vivien's letter; with that new and awful resolve in his heart he dared not trust himself to do so. She was always so gentle and so hopeful, her words would but unman him, and he needed all his courage for the task that lay before him.

But he would not leave her in doubt as to his death and Kate's freedom. Yes, "it would be better for all connected with him if he were dead." So he took up paper and pen and wrote these few lines to Vivien, whilst in his heart he breathed a hundred blessings over her:—

"MY DARLING SISTER,—When you get this I shall have ceased to trouble you. I have been a sore disgrace to you all, and I am going to make what reparation is in my power. Let Kate know that she is free; she will be glad. But you, out of the fulness and love of your dear heart, will sometimes spare a moment to think of the unhappy wretch who has worked out his doom by his own folly. I thank you for all your goodness and patience, and may Heaven in its mercy make your life replete with happiness! Pray my father and Ruby to forgive me.—Your loving brother,

"CHARLES POMFRET."

Having sealed and directed this letter, he went out, posting it on his way. Then he walked swiftly towards the river, shuddering a little as he looked into its dark depths. A groan broke from his lips, but he hesitated no longer. One frantic leap, a heavy splash in the water—no one heard or heeded; but in the early morning some men saw his body afloat, and drew it to shore.

Ten days later, when Ruby and Vivien returned from a garden party, that fatal letter was handed to the latter, together with a newspaper account of the tragedy, for friends had recognised the unfortunate young man.

With a loud cry, Vivien fell face downwards to the ground, for awhile mercifully unconscious.

And Kate—well, three months later, she married the proprietor of "The Salisbury."

CHAPTER VII.

Christmas was once again drawing near, and Volsen Dane was much exercised in his mind whether or no to accept Mrs. Craig's invitation. Every impulse of his nature urged him to go to Edelsworth, on the mere chance of seeing Vivien, though he certainly hoped nothing from a meeting between them; and yet he felt he must look on her beautiful face once more before tearing himself from her for ever.

He had taken a splendid degree, and was eager to begin the practice of his profession.

"With her to spur me on," he thought, "I should have won fame; now, what does it all matter? If I become famous, my name must die with me; I shall have neither wife nor child to perpetuate it."

In the end, yielding to the entreaties of Junius and the longings of his heart, he agreed to go to Laxbank on the twenty-second of December, and together the young men travelled as before on that journey, which must be ever memorable to them, and each thought with a dull pain of that little, dainty figure, the bright face of the girl who had accompanied them.

They met with the warmest welcome, and Volsen was scarcely aware how eagerly he looked round for some sign of Vivien; but Chatterbox, who was keen of perception, saw and understood, and drawing him a little apart, said:—

"You are wondering why the Pomfrets are not here; and we do miss them awfully, but

they are not visiting yet. It is scarcely six months since their only brother committed suicide in America. He had married a dreadful woman, I suppose, and he could not bear his life. It was an awful shock to them all, and the professor has never recovered from it. He was rather hard on Charlie, I think. Ruby is quite her old self again, and is soon to be married; but Vivien devotes herself to her father, and is such a changed Vivien, you would hardly know her. But we can drive over to see them to-morrow, if you care to."

With a pang he realised he had no right now to visit her, so he made some incoherent answer, and spoke of other things. But all the while he was wondering, if he had waited for an explanation, might not all have been different for him and for Vivien? Had he really been too hard with her?

Junius watched him anxiously, knowing well where he went when he started on those long, solitary rambles, and when he returned, weary and sombre, he knew that he had been unsuccessful in his attempt to see Vivien.

Christmas Day came at last, and Volsen, begging off from church, asked Junius to accompany him to Braybrook.

"I can't go on in this fashion much longer," he said, when they were well on their way. "I must see her and cast myself on her mercy. I can't live without her. I never guessed what she was to me. I never believed myself capable of such intense passion. Forgive me, Cross, I had forgotten that what she is to me she is also to you."

The faithful eyes grew very soft.

"No, Volsen, not that. You love her as a man loves his possible wife; I, as men love the angels above. I feel myself unworthy to touch her hand. If she never had seen you, she still would never have turned to me. The white dove does not mate with the birds of night. Be good to her; she has suffered so much and so long. Forget your pride, and believe against all evidence that she has never wronged you."

Volsen sighed wearily. He had not forgotten his suspicions; they were not wholly at rest yet, but he could hold out no longer. Turning to Junius, he caught his hand in a friendly clasp.

"Old man, if ever I recover my lost happiness I shall have you to thank for it. You are a true friend, and I think there is nothing you would hesitate to do for her."

"I would die for her!" the other answered, quite quietly. "I cannot dream of a happier fate."

Volsen looked at him as at a visionary, then he said, slowly:

"You shame me, Cross. You are the stuff that heroes and martyrs are made of."

But Junius shook his head, half-laughing.

And now the chimneys of Vivien's home were in sight. The house lay in a little valley, and quite recently a new line had been constructed which passed quite close to the rear, much to the professor's annoyance.

"When I am well again," he was wont to say, "I shall sell the place and buy another further removed from all the noise of this dreadful, bustling world," and Ruby would smile, having small faith in her father's protestations.

"He has not energy enough to remove his belongings," she laughingly told her fiancé, a good-looking debonair young fellow, who thought there was no light to compare with the light of her dark eyes.

"We are so near, won't you go in now?" urged Junius, wistfully. "You will find her kind and good. She may be proud, but she cannot cherish malice."

And whilst the young men halted by the level crossing suddenly they saw a woman's figure approaching, and each caught his breath, for it was Vivien—Vivien walking with downcast head and white, sorrowful face.

She evidently had not seen them. She was buried in a reverie, which, to judge from her expression, was not of a happy nature. Now

she had drawn close to the crossing. She had passed the first two metals when Volsen, unable to restrain himself longer, called her name.

"Vivien!"

She started, uttered a sharp cry, and as though rooted to the spot, stood with her brown eyes dilated and fixed upon his face. Then it was that a shrill whistle was heard, and round the curve rushed and rattled the up express.

"For Heaven's sake, back!" shouted Volsen. But, between her amazement at seeing him there and the terror that held her spellbound, she remained immovable; and in vain the engine driver endeavoured to slow up.

With a hoarse cry Volsen sprang forward. Oh, Heaven! Must she die before his eyes? But Junius was quicker than he.

"Not you," he said, flinging him back. "Live for her!" And then he had crossed the metals, and, catching Vivien in his arms, flung her violently to the pathway. There was no time for him to escape, and down he went before that terrible monster with a horrible crash.

And when the last carriage had passed over his poor mutilated body Volsen rushed to his side. He could not think even of Vivien then, only of this friend who had so gladly given himself for her happiness and his.

"Junius! Junius!" he cried, the great sobs tearing at his heart. "For Heaven's sake, speak! Old friend! old friend! Oh, Heaven! oh, Heaven!" and lower bowed the proud Saxon head over the swarthy placid face; and surely it was no shame to Volsen Dane that he wept like a child then.

In an incredibly short time a number of people appeared.

Vivien, who was stunned, was carried first to the house, and then, a rough litter being constructed, they bore Junius there, too, the professor walking beside him with all his old calm broken through, and his faded eyes blinded by a mist of tears.

"No hope," said the doctor; "his lower limbs are crushed. He will not suffer much pain. I do not think he will last twenty-four hours. If you need help, Miss Ruby, I will send it on to you."

"No, no. My sister and I will stay by him to the end," said Ruby, her voice all shaken and her heart aching with pain for this man who had proved himself so great a hero. "No other hands than ours shall minister to his needs."

Junius opened his eyes and stretched out his hand to the girl.

"Thank you," he said. "I did save her, then. Where is she; and where is Volsen?"

"Volsen is here. Vivien will come to you soon. She was so shaken I could not allow her to enter before."

He lay quiet, with the beauty and grandeur of death already stealing over his face, which had in no way been injured. Then he said—

"You know what cause of quarrel our two dear ones had. Will you tell us all the truth before I pass away? I could not die in peace without being assured of her happiness!"

So Ruby, to whom all was known now, told the story of her sister's sacrifice and suffering, of all that she had done for Charlie. She hid nothing from them, and Volsen's fair face drooped until it lay beside the dark head upon the pillows.

"What a blind, besotted fool I have been!" he said. "I never can hope that she will forgive me, my girl! my girl!"

"Then you do not know a woman's heart," said Ruby, who since her own happy love experience had grown gentler and sweeter. "The more she has to forgive the more she loves. I will tell her now."

And then Vivien, white and shaken, entered. In that moment she had no thought of any but Junius, who had saved her from so cruel a death. She fell on her knees beside him. She

prisoned one dark hand in hers, kissing it wildly, whilst the tears fell fast upon it.

The dying face, with all its ineffable love and peace, was turned upon her, the dying eyes full of a look she could no longer mistake, smiled upon her with a new light, a new glory.

"Little one, dear one," murmured the failing voice, which even in its failing was musical and tender, "I saved you for him. He knows all now, and only prays your forgiveness, which you will not deny. Give me your hand now, and yours, Volsen. Here over my dying body swear that the past shall be buried between you; that the love each bears the other shall not be barren or hopeless any more!"

Hand touched hand over that stricken form.

"I promise," said Vivien, with a burst of tears.

"And I promise," answered Volsen, huskily.

Ah! the look of peace on the changed and glorified face! He lay quite still a little while, then suddenly he turned to Vivien.

"Dear, I have loved you from the first, vain and presumptuous as it all was. I tried to serve you in life, but it was not permitted me; but death is sweet, having brought the accomplishment of my desire. In life Volsen could not harbour one jealous thought of me; in death he will not refuse the boon I crave. Kiss me once, my sweet, upon the mouth and let me go!"

Weeping, Vivien bent over him and laid the ripeness of her lips to his that were grown so cold, feeling in that moment her heart must break with its pity and pain for this man who had, indeed, loved her unto death.

He was very quiet after that, scarcely seeming to breathe; but as midnight drew near he turned upon his pillows, fancying he heard the music of church bells.

"What is it, dear?" questioned Vivien, bending low over him.

"The bells! The bells! Peace and goodwill! Peace and goodwill!" and then he spoke no more.

When another Christmas dawned there was a quiet wedding at Braybrook (Ruby had married in the previous June), and the bride was Vivien.

Her lovely face was softened and chastened by the sorrows through which she had passed, but what it had lost in brilliancy it had gained in tenderness; and as she emerged from the porch, leaning on her husband's arm, a quiver of pain passed over it, and her eyes grew dim as they rested on the white grave of one who had loved her with a love passing that of woman.

She left her bridegroom's side, and moving swiftly, tremulously, to the lonely mound, gently placed her bridal flowers upon it.

The sun shone out with sudden splendour, shone upon her bowed bright head; and the quiet grave and its glory was a foreshadowing of what her life would henceforth be, sheltered by Volsen's love!

[THE END.]

THE NEED OF HELP

It isn't so hard for a man

To make the long, hard fight

That they must make who gain the height,

If people tell him he can;

It isn't so hard to try,

To eagerly do and plan,

If people sometimes, in passing by,

Just tell you they know you can.

It is very hard for a man

To fight on day by day—

To beat his foes along the way—

If nobody says he can.

Oh, men may be wise and strong,

And plan as the victors plan,

But they seldom get very far along

If nobody says they can.

Gems

HONOUR comes by diligence; riches spring from economy.

NATIONAL progress is the sum of individual industry and energy.

A MAN who dares to waste an hour of time has not learned the value of time.

THE chief constituents of what we call manhood are moral rather than intellectual.

To a man there is something humiliating in having a woman direct his comings and goings.

WHEN you step up on one promise, you will always find a higher and a better one before you.

DRESS is a poor index. Many a young man is not so bright as his necktie would make him appear.

A BLESSING must be shared before it will be repeated. God's gifts bless as they are received; they bless twice as they are imparted.

IT is by no means as important that things go your way as that they go God's way. Think of this the next time things are against you.

ALL tastes gratified, all success obtained, each step won by gratified pride, every end attained, leaves in certain natures a feeling of insufficiency and disappointment.

LET it be our happiness this day to add to the happiness of those around us, to comfort some sorrow, to relieve some want, to add some strength to our neighbour's virtue.

THE habit of blaming others when things go wrong is an insidious and dangerous one. Far more is it the purpose to inquire within whether the fault, or much of it, may not lie at home.

MANY persons fancy themselves friendly when they are only officious. They counsel not so much that you should become wise as that they should be recognised as teachers of wisdom.

MAXIMS OF ROCHEFOUCAULD

Some weak people are so sensible of their weakness as to be able to make a good use of it.

Few men are able to know all the ill they do.

The desire of appearing to be persons of ability often prevents our being so.

We should often be ashamed of our best actions, if the world were witness to the motives which produced them.

There is nearly as much ability requisite to know how to make use of good advice as to know how to act for one's self.

We may give good advice but we cannot give conduct.

We are never made so ridiculous by the qualities we have as by those we affect to have.

Whatever we may pretend, interest and vanity are the usual sources of our affliction.

There are in affliction several kinds of hypocrisy. We weep to acquire the reputation of being tender; we weep in order to be pitied; we weep that we may be wept over; we even weep to avoid the scandal of not weeping.

We judge so superficially of things that common words and actions, spoken and done in an agreeable manner, with some knowledge of what passes in the world, often succeed beyond the greatest ability.

When great men suffer themselves to be subdued by the length of their misfortunes, they discover that the strength of their ambition, not of their understanding, was that which supported them. They discover, too, that, allowing for a little vanity, heroes are just like other men.

Those who apply themselves too much to little things commonly become incapable of great ones.

Cleanings

SURPRISED.—The thriftiness of a London shopkeeper is illustrated in a story told of a dry-goods dealer. The merchant was of an excitable temperament, and on hearing his assistant say to a customer, "No, we have not had any for a long time," was unable to countenance such an admission. He fixed his eye on the assistant, and said to the customer: "We have plenty in reserve, ma'am, plenty upstairs." The customer looked dazed for a moment, and the shopkeeper did not seem happy when his assistant informed him that the customer was speaking about the weather, and had remarked, "We haven't had any rain lately."

RARE OLD LACE.—Would-be purchasers of rare old lace invariably inquire as to its probable age. The unscrupulous dealer frequently attributes great age to a piece of lace made in the eighteenth century. Until the reign of Queen Elizabeth, in England, at all events, lace, as applied to dress, does not appear at all in the portraits of the time. Sixteenth-century lace, whether in Venice, or Belgium, or France, is entirely different in design and execution from that of the seventeenth century, and both in turn differ in a marked degree from eighteenth-century patterns. So if the lace is undoubtedly old and genuine it is not difficult to determine its age.

POISON ABSORBING QUALITY OF COLD WATER.—In connection with the subject of water, there is one peculiar property of that liquid with which everyone should be made acquainted, and that is its capacity for absorbing impurities, which increases proportionately the colder it gets. Hence, water that has stood in an insufficiently ventilated sleeping chamber all night is not only unpleasant, but positively injurious to drink, since it readily absorbs the poisonous gases given off by respiration and the action of the skin. An ordinary pitcher of water, under such conditions, at a temperature of sixty degrees will be found to have absorbed during the night from a pint to a pint and a half of carbonic acid gas, and an increase of ammonia. Ice-water is an objectionable drink at all times, but if it is indulged in the vessel containing it should never be left uncovered in sleeping or sitting-rooms, because at freezing point its capacity for absorbing these deleterious substances is nearly doubled.

THE LOT OF THE HINDU WOMAN.—To cook, to sew, to help her mother in the first instance, and her husband later on—for there is never any question as to a Hindu girl's marriage—is the utmost ambition of an Indian girl. The parents of the young people arrange the match, and for no cause or pretext whatever can marriage be set aside. Before she has reached her early teens the maiden becomes a wife, so that there is but scant time in which to secure an education in the scholastic sense of the word. Four or five years at the most is the time permitted for study, even amongst girls of the higher classes. It is pleasing to note the fact that to-day the mothers of India are awake to the importance of securing a good education for their boys, and in some instances for their girls, so that the prospect before the Hindu woman of the future is better. Until an Indian girl becomes a wife she takes part in the various games played in different provinces. Until she is ten or eleven she may join in the ordinary boys' games, but after she has attained these years she is thought unbecomingly should she do so. The young wife does not leave her parents' home immediately on completion of the marriage ceremony, but remains there, visiting only occasionally her husband's family, until she ceases to be a stranger amongst them. If her husband's folk are good and kind, her life, in all probability, is a happy one; if otherwise, there is nothing but misery of an aggravated kind in store for her. At the best her life is one of incessant service.

HOW SEA BIRDS QUENCH THEIR THIRST.—The question is often asked: "Where do sea birds obtain fresh water to slake their thirst?" But it has never been satisfactorily answered until recently. An old skipper has told how he has seen these birds at sea, far from any land that could furnish them with water, hovering around and under a storm cloud, clattering like ducks on a hot day at a pond, and drinking in the drops of rain as they fell. They will smell a rain squall a hundred miles distant, or even further off, and scud for it with almost inconceivable swiftness. How long sea birds can exist without water is only a matter of conjecture, but probably their powers of enduring thirst are increased by habit, and possibly they go without water for many days, if not for several weeks.

HOUSING AND GROWTH.—There is an affinity between bad housing and a low standard of height, weight, and girth in children, just as there is known to be between bad housing and low conditions of health and nutrition. According to an authoritative report, Edinburgh children are throughout much below those of Aberdeen children in height and weight, and that to a startling degree. The Edinburgh average school child is 1.35in. shorter and 4.97lb. lighter than the Aberdeen school child. This shows a serious deficiency somewhere in Edinburgh. The Edinburgh child is 1.28in. shorter and 5.61lb. lighter than the British standard. The conclusion reached, after making all possible allowances for sources of error, is that there is "clearly a stratum of degeneracy in Edinburgh not reached in Aberdeen," and that this degeneracy is to be traced to the inferior conditions under which the children live at home.

A BARGAINING BUILDER.—A man who had made his fortune as a builder of small houses had erected for himself a mansion, a show-palace of the most modern type, and had been advised that the place would be incomplete unless the rooms were ornamented with paintings by really great artists. Accordingly, he called upon a picture-dealer and explained his requirements. The dealer showed him first the most valuable painting he had on hand. "Here, sir," said he, "is a very fine thing; it is a genuine Rembrandt." The builder examined the picture with such an air of experience as he would have assumed had he been inspecting a piece of brickwork. "Yes," said he, at last, "it is very well done. Whose work did you say it was?" "Rembrandt's," the dealer replied. "Well, then," said the man of bricks and mortar, "if you tell Mr. Rembrandt to call and see me, I'll see if I can make a bargain with him!"

CHINESE TRAMPS.—Even in so poor a country as China beggars of wit and impudence can get a living. The chief dependence of the tramps is upon their women and children. They walk through the main streets begging from shop to shop, but depending as much upon what they can snatch from the counter from goods spread out for sale as upon what might seem a more legitimate mode of getting help. The children learn to pilfer from the pastryman, while their mothers pick up all the little articles that come in their way. If caught, they still usually get off with their booty, the shopman not caring to engage in a contest with a woman. In fact, he is in what might be called a three-cornered dilemma. It will not do for the man to come to blows in maintaining his rights, for then an offended husband will have the advantage. Should he try using the national weapon of offence or defence—reviling—he is likely to meet his match in the fair one, who has a nimble tongue, sharper from the constant use in cursing the children and quarrels with her neighbours. While if he goes to law and has the petty thieves arrested, the official is likely to laugh at the whole affair as too trivial, or remind the plaintiff that according to law he cannot punish the culprits, as the goods were taken before his face and eyes!

INQUIRED THE PRICE.—He: "Then everything is fixed, and we can be married in May, can't we?"—She: "There is only one thing I have not spoken of, and mamma insisted that I must."—He: "Certainly, my angel. What is it? Bid me go through any trial for your dear sake, and I'll do it. Ask for the Golden Fleece, and if such a thing is in existence I'll get it."—aye, even though I must swim the seas, climb the loftiest peaks, or search in the fuming craters of mighty volcanoes, I'll do it."—She: "It isn't much, my dear. Mamma said I must ask you how much you intended to allow me a week for pin-money."—He: "Um—er—how much are pins a paper now?"

BOB BURDETTE TO YOUNG MEN.—Remember, son, that the world is older than you are by several years; that for thousands of years it has been so full of smarter and better young men than yourself that their feet stuck out of the dormer windows; that when they died the old globe went whirling on, and not one man in ten millions went to the funeral. Don't be too sorry for your father because he knows so much less than you do. Remember the reply of Dr. Wayland to the student of Brown University, who said it was an easy enough thing to make proverbs such as Solomon wrote. "Make a few," tersely replied the old man. The world has great need of young men, but no greater need than the young men have for it. Your clothes fit you better than your father's clothes fit him; they cost more money, and they are more stylish; your moustache is neater; the cut of your hair is better. But, young man, the old gentlemen gets the biggest salary, and his homely, scrambling signature on the business end of a cheque will drain more money out of the bank in five minutes than you could get out with a ream of paper and a copper-plate signature in six months.

BEES AND RED CLOVER.—Select strains of Italian bees work, under certain circumstances, on the blossoms of common red clover, particularly of the second crop, the corollas of the latter being shorter than those of the first crop—at least, in most cases. Carniolan bees also work on these blossoms. Had the same care been bestowed upon the Carniolan race in the way of selection of breeding material during the past forty years that has been given to the Italian race, no doubt select strains might now exist which would work to a greater extent on red clover than the best-bred Italians. The longest-tongued honey-bees, however, are the Cyprian race, and these work the most freely on red clover under such conditions as any bees will work on this plant. All honey-bees, whenever seen working on blossoms, are distributing pollen, of course, and effecting the pollination of the pistils; yet the main pollinators of red clover are still wild bees, especially those of the genus *bombus*—the common bumblebees.

TOLD BY A BAKER.—Bakers have their own way of telling just what the temperature of the oven is, and they can tell, too, with almost marvellous accuracy. You take a man who is an expert in the business, and he can tell what the temperature of the oven is by simply touching the handle of the oven door. In nine cases out of ten he will not miss it to the fraction of a degree. Bakers have other ways, of course, of testing the heat of the oven. For instance, when baking bread they sometimes throw a piece of white paper into the oven, and if it turns brown the oven is at the proper temperature; or, when baking other things, they will throw a little cornmeal flour into the oven in order to test the heat. But the baker's fingers are the best gauge, and when you come to think of the different temperatures required in baking different things, it is no small achievement to even approximate the heat of the oven by touching the handle of the oven door. Different foods require different degrees of heat in baking; but whatever temperature the old baker wants, he can tell when he has it by simply touching the handle of the oven door.

KIT

By EFFIE ADELAIDE ROWLANDS

Author of "Unseen Fires," "Woman Against Woman," "Her Mistake, etc., etc."

CHAPTER XIX.

LADY MILBOROUGH sat nodding her head by the open window. The day had been very hot—sultry, in fact—and dark clouds were gathering over the evening sky, threatening to break later on in a thunderous shower. Kit had an open book on her knees. She had ceased reading a few minutes ago when she saw Lady Milborough's eyes close. She rested back in her low chair and sighed faintly.

She felt very, very weary; the heat of the day had tried her, and then she had done so much. She had risen with the actual dawn, and had gone out into the silent gardens, culling her roses to carry a message on the morning that was to give Sybil such happiness. A special messenger obtained by taking Mason, the butler into her confidence, was to journey across the country to Hulstead, so that the message of love and remembrance should not fail to reach the girl bride.

Kit had touched no breakfast; her heart was too full—full not of selfish regrets or sorrow, but of shadowing fears and dreads for the future of the gentle being to whose tender heart she owed so much. When the morning advanced she stole away to the village. The church was open; she went in and knelt down, and there, alone in that sacred place, she prayed with all the fervour of her young, pure faith that Sybil might be spared the sorrow she feared, and Maurice might be changed and made more worthy of the wife he had won.

She was very quiet all day, and Lady Milborough looked at her anxiously once or twice.

"You have a headache, my dear," she said, in the afternoon; "it is no use shaking your head; I know—I know—there is thunder in the air. It has been a beautiful day, but there is thunder all the same. I hope our little bride will not be overtaken by it. Philip tells me they have decided to cross over to Paris to-night." And then the old lady talked on about the wedding and about Sybil, of whom she was very fond, and of Maurice, whom she knew only slightly.

"It must have been a pretty sight. Sybil is no beauty, but she is a dear little lady, and Maurice is handsome enough for them both. You have not seen him, of course, Kit?" The girl had once spoken of herself by her old nickname, and Lady Milborough always used it. "Such a gallant young man—a real soldier, and as brave as he looks. They begin well, truly—may they be very happy."

Kit echoed the wish from the bottom of her heart, but, despite her prayers and her hopes, the fears would live, and she grew cold and sick as she heard Maurice praised and remembered what he really was.

"If it had not been August, and I had been a little stronger, I should have enjoyed this wedding," Lady Milborough said, as they sat together in the pretty drawing-room, and then she laughed. "Philip always declares I am the most dissipated old woman he has ever met."

Kit laughed at this.

"Sir Philip will tell you all about it," she said.

"Yes; but, of course, I must wait. There will be high jinks at Hulstead—dances and so forth—and Philip will have to stay for everything—not that he cares for dancing; but they will not let him escape in a hurry. Well, I can wait, and there is one thing so sure—Philip Desmond, one may be quite certain he will never disappoint one in the very least; the best man in the world, my dear, the very best."

And then Lady Milborough had taken up her knitting, and Kit had opened her book, the latest literary success of the moment (Lady Milborough always kept herself "au courant" with the times as far as she possibly could), and read steadily, her soft, pretty voice sounding musically on the still, hot air.

And then the old lady had gradually succumbed to the soothing influences of the warmth, and the gentle music of the girl's voice, and her knitting had dropped from her hands, while her head rested back against the cushions and her eyes closed.

Kit sat very silent. She was not in the least sleepy, though she was very tired. Thoughts came and went quickly in her mind, sombre thoughts all of them—memories of moments that were one and all sad. There was so little that had been sunshine in her short life, only the remembrance of her friendship with Chris, and the jaunts and pranks they had been capable of and had performed. A fleeting smile played unconsciously on her lips for a second as these past delights came before her mind's eye, but the smile did not linger, and the old grave air dwelt on her brow and in her expression.

Constance was a source of sadness and regret to her. Up to now there had always been an element of illusion about Constance Marlowe to her young cousin.

Her gentle beauty, her soft voice, her pretty presence; Kit had worshipped them all. She had been wont to feel clumsy and hideous when Constance had been near, but her admiration was only the more sincere for this fact, and she had only wished wistfully that she could have been like Constance, that her skin might be as fair and her red locks changed to the soft brown of Constance's tresses.

How far away all that girlish admiration and enthusiasm seemed now to Kit, and yet in time it was only a few months.

The illusion and dreams, and poetry of years—albeit the short span of years that measured her life—all brushed away in so short a time!

It was a horrible experience. Vaguely she wished she had never been given the nature she possessed. If she had only been born without a heart, with common-sense instead of poetry, and materialism instead of sympathy.

Chris had been cleverer than she after all. He had not understood all her moods, but he had known whom to trust and whom to shun; he had known the difference between good and evil, between the true and the false.

She remembered now how often they had quarrelled over Constance, how angry she had been at Chris's refusal to be like her and accept her cousin as an angel.

"I tell you I don't like Constance Marlowe, and I don't trust her one little bit. I think she is a cat, mean and selfish, and—beastly. Oh! I know you will never believe me; but just you wait some day, and see if you don't find out for yourself I am quite right."

That had been Chris's invariable remark when the subject of Constance Marlowe was ever broached between them, and Kit sighed now as she recalled how futile had been her hot anger, so sincere in its truth and loyalty.

Constance had proved the truth of Chris's boyish shrewdness to a great extent. She had been a disappointment and a disillusionment in her way as great as that other.

Her last bitter words, mingling with spite, never left Kit's memory; yet, with a weary sigh, the girl said to herself over and over again that she could not see how or why she had deserved them.

She had only been reasonable in her answer to Constance's most unreasonable demand, and the whole matter had been clothed with a mysterious anxiety which, in her awakened mental condition, Kit felt was connected more closely with Constance's own desires and pleasures than with any thought of helping or pleasing her.

Was the world all selfish and hard and bitter like this? Must she meet disappointment at every turn?

Her heart filled with sudden reproach as her eyes fell on Lady Milborough. All her goodness, coupled with that of Sybil, rose to her mind.

She must put a guard on herself lest she should grow ungenerous and forgetful. She rose and went softly out of the open window. The heat was increasing and the thunder was drawing near.

She sighed and pushed back the heavy masses of her hair from her brow. To her this dark cloud, gathered gloomy and heavy on the summer sky, was an omen of evil to Sybil.

"If only he will be good to her; if only she may never know what I have known."

That was her one thought.

She moved softly to and fro on the grass, looking back now and then to the figure of the old lady asleep in her chair. She would return at once when the peaceful siesta was over.

But Lady Milborough slept on serenely, and Kit was free to move about.

She was sitting looking across the sky beyond the trees, that presented a mixture of curious harmonies of colour as the sun strove with the clouds, when a shadow fell across the grass, and, turning, she gave a start, for Philip Desmond stood beside her.

"Have I startled you?" he said, quickly, as he noticed her quick flush, followed by what seemed to him sudden pallor. "I am sorry!"

He was holding her little hand in his tenderly, and his eyes dwelt on her loveliness with an earnestness of which he was not wholly conscious.

It seemed to him a year since he had seen her. His heart beat fast and nervously. It was to him as though each throbbing must proclaim the story that lived in his heart.

Kit left her hand lying unconsciously in his. She was very glad to see him. A moment before she had not imagined it possible she could be so glad about anything.

But there was something about Philip that carried pleasure and comfort to her.

He was so kind, so thoughtful, so full of illimitable sympathy, and he was her friend! She reproached herself, all at once, that she should have let herself forget this even for a moment.

It was so good a thing to know she had this friend. She, who now that Chris was lost to her and Sybil cut away from her, had such need of a friend.

"You did startle me a little, just a little. Sir Philip," she said, as she drew her hand away; "but—but then I never thought to see you to-day. Lady Milborough will be so glad, and so am I!" she added, frankly, ingenuously, little knowing what sudden joy her words gave him. "How did you come? We imagined you at Hulstead, and—"

"I have just come from Hulstead," Philip answered, gaily.

It was like heaven to him to be here in this old garden with this girl's slender loveliness before him in its living actuality, not the visionary creation of his memory and his dreams.

He drew a chair forward for her and threw himself into another. He looked unusually smart, and almost young, in his grey frock coat, with a white flower in the button-hole. Kit seemed to realise all at once that this new friend of hers was by no means the old man she had considered him.

The sudden happiness that had come into his heart was making itself known in his face. He had always been distinguished and soldierly; now he was definitely handsome.

The girl coloured a little as this discovery



HIT GAVE A START, FOR PHILIP DESMOND STOOD BESIDE HER.

came to her; she felt shy with him all at once, but Philip did not notice it.

"I have just come from Hulstead; and now I am going to make a confession to you, Miss Kit." He, too, had picked up the old name Chris had given her long ago. "At this present moment I am supposed to be making the best of my way back to that spot, and you see me here with absolutely no intention of doing anything of the sort."

Kit looked at him out of her shy, luminous eyes, that yet had that depth of sadness in them that always touched his heart so quickly.

"You want to know how I managed this. Well, it was very easy. When the bride and bridegroom started I accompanied them to Junction to see them safely away in the train; and when they had been whirled out of sight I suddenly felt a longing to get away from all the bustle and the confusion that is prevalent at the Manor just now, naturally. Dances are not in my line, and a cosy chat with my dear old cousin in this quiet, peaceful garden more suited to a quiet old fogey like me. So, without more thought, instead of taking a train back to Hulstead, I jumped into one that would land me at the destination of my desire; and here I am!"

Kit smiled faintly. The pleasure of seeing him had swept away for a moment the pain, the troubles, the forebodings that had hung about her all the day; but they were coming back now.

The thought of Sybil had been so prominent with her, and the intelligence that the marriage was absolutely sealed and done revived all the sorrowful dreads that her bitter experience taught her were only too well founded.

"Did she look happy?" she asked Sir Philip, in a low voice.

He turned at the sound. There was something in the tone so sad, so eager, so wistful.

"She had a look on her face as though the

sun were in her heart," he answered, gently. "Dear little Sybil! Heaven grant the sun may never wholly set!"

Kit put her hands before her face, and broke into a sudden passion of tears. The strain on her nervous system, not only of to-day but of days past, had been something terrible.

She was, after all, so young—a mere child—and she had had to play the part of a grown woman—a woman to whom the bitterness of life was known in all its power and fulness.

She had met and faced the fight bravely; but she was not made of iron or steel, and it was only nature, after all, that a limit should come to her endurance.

Philip sat looking at her in an agony of sudden pain, as she rose and moved swiftly away down the garden till the trees hid her from his sight.

He was touched to the quick by her tears. The sorrow he had read in her eyes had made itself manifest to him in other little ways. Of late he had grown to regard her as something that needed tender aid and comfort. It was this indefinite sorrow that drew out his sympathy and love as her beautiful youth drew out his heart in admiration.

The image Constance had given him of the girl, the hoyden, the headstrong, reckless creature, whose sole enjoyment was an indulgence in practical jokes and tomboy acts with a boyish companion, had long since been pushed into the background. It was not possible to Philip to reconcile such a picture with the one that he had always before his eyes.

The gentle, graceful girl, soft-voiced, soft-mannered, lovely in her loveliness, her face eloquent with poetry, thought and sadness. That childhood was not quite dead within her he knew quite well. Despite her sadness, there would come a gleam of merriment, almost of mischief, into those most marvellous eyes, but more than this never, and if Philip had not been so wrapped about in the dreamy

ecstasy that his love developed, he must, of a certainty, have set himself to think a little on the story Constance had told him so glibly, and have commenced to doubt the truth of it. But since that day when the knowledge of his heart revealed itself to him suddenly, Philip had forgotten everything but the fact that he loved her, that his love deepened and strengthened every day of his life. The past melted away—he lived in the present.

Kit was to him the keynote of his existence, the queen of his dreams; he realised her in her soft, gentle, sad loveliness; he wanted nothing more. But all at once he was recoiled from his dreams. Her sudden passion of tears alarmed and distressed him. He sat quietly thinking, and Constance's words came back to him, and all the memory of the escapade that had led to Kit being where she now was, and under his kinswoman's roof.

His brows contracted, his happiness faded for the moment—he felt as though a cloud had passed over the sunshine and darkened it suddenly. He sat gazing across the lawn, while the thunder gathered and murmured far away, and a stillness hung about the old garden, broken only by the twittering of the birds and the croak of a distant frog.

The atmosphere was oppressive, the heat intense.

Philip Desmond took his hat from his head and passed his hand over his brow. His heart was in a tumult—sensations he had not experienced since boyhood jostled themselves one against the other in his mind—fears, hopes, longings.

He rose to his feet suddenly—a light came into his face.

"I will speak to her now. I will tell her the truth. Perhaps she will not understand, yet—but it is better to speak, and I may give her comfort. I may touch this sorrow and help to smooth it away; at any rate, I will speak—silence is torture. I must know her mind at once; I can wait no longer."

CHAPTER XX.

He found her sitting by the old moss-covered sundial. She was crouched on the step, her head with its glorious colouring bowed on her arms. She lifted her face suddenly as she heard his step. It was tear-stained and white and drawn, but it was to him more lovely than ever.

He put out his hand and let it rest on her head. She did not shrink from his touch.

"Child," he said, tenderly, "you are in trouble. I am your friend. You must let me help you."

Her lips quivered, she drew his hand suddenly from her head, and pressed her hot lips upon it. He thrilled at her touch.

"Tell me your sorrow, Kit. You can trust me, can you not?"

She looked up at him with eloquent eyes.

"Yes," she said, but she said no more.

Philip stood before her and drew her to her feet.

"I am not going to try and read your secrets or probe your heart. I only want to comfort you, little one, for—*for* you are very dear to me. I am afraid I shall never be able to tell you just how dear."

She looked at him in bewilderment at first, then an emotion passed over her face, moving it as a wind ripples the bosom of a lake.

There was something exquisite in the expression—joy, delight, happiness, all mingled with the tear-stains of sorrow.

"You—you care for me?" she said.

The words were hardly more than a whisper. Oh! if he could only know what glorious warmth the mere thought had shed into her desolate young heart.

"You care for me?" she said.

Her two hands were resting in his unconsciously, confidingly, clingingly, like the hands of a child.

His hold tightened on them a little.

"I care for you!" he said, unsteadily. "Ay, little Kit, I care for you more than I have ever cared for human creature in my life yet, or ever shall again."

She looked at him in silence, her great eyes full of wonderment of growing joy; and then she gave a little cry, and bent her head to kiss his hands again.

"Oh! you are good, you are good," she cried. "If you could only know how I have longed to be cared for. I have been alone all my life. I have only had Chris and Hepsie, and sometimes a dog, until I met Sybil and Lady Milborough; and now—now I have you!" She could say no more.

She forgot her promise of silence in this moment of sudden gladness. She spoke openly of Chris.

Loyalty was one of the strongest characteristics. Even in such a moment she did not forget Chris.

The true meaning of Philip Desmond's words did not quite come to her, even as the true meaning of Maurice's false love had not come to her.

The sorrow and bitterness she had felt when Maurice's treachery reached her was not the sorrow or bitterness of a betrayed love. It was the crushing sorrow of disillusionment, of knowledge, of disappointment, of destruction to faith, to beliefs that had been part of her nature itself.

It was the tearing down of all that was beautiful and poetic; it was the wrenching asunder of sympathy full of delicate fancy and harmony.

Kit was, at heart, a child still in the knowledge of the great secret of life. Love in its fullest meaning had yet to come to her.

Philip did not misunderstand her; he read her eyes, not her words.

He knew it was the cry of a hungry heart that rang out now—that she clung to him and to his love from sheer destitution and desolation. But though he knew this, his love was not chilled, his hope undimmed.

There was a whisper of future happiness in her childish abandon. He was content to

know that she was glad to have his love. In time her's would come in return. He would wait content till that time.

"Yes, little one, you have me to help you, to comfort you, to protect you." He drew her a little closer to him. "Some day you will tell me your sorrow, but you shall not tell me now, unless you wish to do so. You shall listen to me instead."

He paused a moment.

Kit was silent; a little colour had come into her white cheeks; her grave, earnest, truthful eyes were looking into his.

She longed to open her heart to him, but it must never be. Her lips were sealed; she would be loyal to Constance, and Maurice was dear to him. How could she speak? And yet it seemed wrong to hold the truth from him.

She was troubled, and he read the trouble in her eyes. He bent his head and kissed her tenderly on the brow.

"I understand," he said, gently; "you would rather not speak now. I will ask no questions. This sorrow I will not try to share, but in the future, if there should be sorrow, I want you to bring it to me; I want you to—*to* turn to me. Kit, for everything; I want you to try and care for me a little, to—"

Her face had flushed like a rose at the touch of his lips; she had drawn back involuntarily, and her hands trembled. Philip held them more closely, and smiled at her.

"You do not understand. You did not know I was so selfish, Kit. You see, I am not easily content. I want more than your friendship, little one; I want you to give me something far bigger, that—that I want you to give me yourself, Kit. Yourself, to be my sunshine and my joy, my treasure, my sweet little wife."

She stood trembling in every limb. The music of his words was almost divine in her ears, the full purport of them was not quite comprehensible, but the chief melody was clear. He wanted her. He asked her to give him something, to be his sunshine, his joy!

Her silence was more eloquent than any speech. With a murmur of deepest love he took her slender form in his arm, and held it close to his heart.

"Heaven grant, you may never regret. Heaven grant I may guard you and keep you from all sorrow, all danger, my heart, my love!"

He kissed the wondrous hair, the white brow; he carried her small hand to his lips. Tears were in his eyes, tears of exquisite happiness.

He was in heaven as he stood there under the trees holding the girl's trembling form in his arms. A distant rumble of thunder recalled him to earth. He smiled down into the girl's shy face and beautiful, unconscious eyes.

"Come, my little one, we must go in; the storm is beginning. You are not afraid, Kit?"

She smiled faintly.

"Never again," she said, quickly, "now I have you!"

With a sudden gesture she turned and kissed the spot where her head had rested against his heart.

It was the action of a child, but it spoke of the woman who would grow from that child, and the man's whole being uttered a prayer of gratitude for the happiness which the future would hold for him.

The ball that was given at Hulstead Manor to celebrate the marriage of its owner's daughter was voted a great success by everybody except one person, and that person was Constance Marlowe.

The wedding ceremony had gone off very well, and if Maurice had looked gloomy and cross, no one had remarked on it except Constance, who was considerably more interested in the bridegroom than she had ever thought

it possible she could have been in anything concerning Maurice Montgomery.

To the rest of the people any ill humour on the part of Maurice was attributed, and very naturally, to nervousness. Everybody knows that bridegrooms rarely show to advantage. Maurice was no exception to the rule.

Sybil, full of blushes, looked prettier than she had ever done. She shed no tears, for she was going from a happy home to one that was even happier. Love was her sun, and there was no cloud to mar its rays.

Sir Philip had been very attentive to Constance Marlowe. He was in high good spirits; no one had ever seen Sir Philip so lively.

Lady Sinclair, a vision of beauty in her Paris dress, declared she did not know him.

"What have you done to yourself, Philip?" she cried. "You look ten years younger. You must be in love!"

Philip had made some laughing remark and escaped her, but his colour had risen; and Constance, who was standing with Lady Sinclair, remarked this with a fast beating heart, and yet with some impatience.

"If he would only speak. Surely, he must soon!"—that was her thought.

Lady Sinclair was delighted at the change in her sober, old friend.

"You have metamorphosed him, Constance," she declared, in her most determined fashion. "Who could have imagined such a change in so short a time. My dear, I congratulate you. Philip has always been an angel; now he is going to be an Adonis. I declare I am half in love with him myself!"

Constance blushed, but, of course, she had to make some protest.

"Dear Lena, you really must not say these things. Sir Philip and I are good friends, nothing more; and it must be someone else who—"

"Rubbish!" was Lady Sinclair's observation. "I have always meant you and Philip to get married, and of course it is you. Who else can it be?"

That was what Constance said to herself, and the thought was distinctly comforting. She was greatly delighted at Lady Sinclair's words, and, indeed, everything looked more than rose-coloured to her eyes.

She did not quite see why Sir Philip need have gone with the newly-married couple to the junction; but, after all, she was rather glad he had done so, for she wanted to rest and have a chat with Lena Sinclair, and she could do so with impunity when she knew Philip was not downstairs left alone with a dozen or so of pretty girls, all of whom were dangerous enough to be possible rivals.

The afternoon wore away pleasantly enough. Lady Sinclair and Constance were congenial companions, though the former had really a good and a womanly heart, an attribute lacking in Miss Marlowe's beautiful physique altogether, and then came dinner and the ball.

Constance was the first to miss Sir Philip, and when by-and-by the truth leaked out, and the news became common property that he had absolutely gone and would not return, she had difficulty in restraining her tears of ill-temper and disappointment.

This action thoroughly upset her—she did not know how to understand it or what to make of it. Lady Sinclair, too, was mystified, and for the first time a doubt as to the success of her matrimonial plan came to her mind.

If Philip were so much in love with Constance he certainly would not have gone away like this with no excuse except a paltry business one which did not deceive her.

"Is there another woman?" she thought to herself, and then she was full of compunction as she remembered all she had said to Constance and the hopes she had encouraged.

"Oh, dear! I do hope not. I shall feel I am a brute to have said so much; and, after all, Philip has never declared himself yet; I can see by Constance's manner that he has really never even led up to the subject of marriage."

Oh, dear! and little Lady Sinclair was genuinely distressed, though she comforted

herself by reiterating there was no one else, there could be no one else—how could there be anyone else without she, Lady Sinclair, being aware of the fact?—all of which amounted to nothing really, and did not carry sound comfort.

When the news came, the news written by Philip with his own hand, Lena Sinclair was absolutely confounded and honestly distressed.

"What shall I say to Constance?" was her first thought, and then she grew angry. "So like Philip. How dare he go and do anything so foolish—it is a madness. Marry a girl like that—a nonentity, a hideous little cat!—it is incomprehensible. And how on earth did he happen to come across her. I thought she was in school in Paris!"

Sir Philip's note had been concise and to the point. It was not very long, and ran:—

"Dear Lena,—You have often enforced upon me the necessity of ending my days in the matrimonial state. I have now to announce to you the fact that I am about to follow Montgomery's good example, and that I contemplate immediate matrimony. You know of my betrothed wife by name, and I fancy you must have seen her, too. She is called Katherine, and is cousin to your friend Miss Constance Marlowe.

"I am sure you will wish your old friend's 'cousin' every happiness.—Ever yours,

"PHILIP DESMOND."

The letter was dated from Lady Milborough's the night of Sybil's marriage.

Lady Sinclair was stunned into inactivity for the moment. She felt she must go to Constance, but what say, what do, she was really quite unhappy. While she debated the door opened and Constance had come in. Constance pale but smiling, with a hard, cold look in her eyes. She was faultlessly attired as ever. She laughed as she came in.

"You have heard the news?" she said, lightly, "here is an astonishment!"

Lady Sinclair looked at her in wonderment. "You have heard it! How?" she asked.

Constance smiled.

"Sir Philip wrote to me. As Katherine's cousin he considered it right, I suppose."

Lady Sinclair was silent. She was full of disappointment and sympathy, but she saw she must express neither.

"You see I was right, Lena," Constance said, after a pause, "there was someone else. I confess, however, I did not dream for the moment that someone else was my cousin. Well!" shrugging her shoulders, "these mistakes will occur. Fortunately there is no great harm done. Will you drive with me at five? We will meet in the hall. Ta, ta!"

Lady Sinclair gazed after Constance. She was still sympathetic, but she was comforted.

"I don't think she cares much," she said. She would have altered her opinion could she have seen Constance in that moment. The rage that disfigured Miss Marlowe's face was something terrible. She sat in an arm-chair, her chin in her hands, her eyes fixed on the letter Philip Desmond had written her as it lay open on her knee.

It was a terrible letter, terrible in its quiet contempt and unutterable disgust and scorn. As long as she lived Constance would never forget this letter.

(To be continued next week.)

This story commenced in No. 3,079. Back numbers can be obtained through all News-agents.

The following dialogue was recently overheard between two Irishmen: "Well, Pat, how are you getting on in the world?" "Very well, thanks, Mr. Doolan. I'm now a prison warden, and make a little extra by selling catables to the prisoners." "And you are married, I suppose, Pat? Did your wife bring you any fortune?" "Bedad, not that exactly, Mr. Doolan, but all her relatives are customers of mine."

JUDITH

CHAPTER XXXV.—(Continued).

Mrs. Trevor drew out a small pocket-book, and thrust it into the girl's hand, closing her reluctant fingers over it determinedly.

"You must pledge yourself to me instead; and I promise not to be a hard creditor. How proud you are! I believe it hurts you to be under an obligation; but it need not be a gift, unless you like. You can pay it back to-morrow, or a year hence!"

With some difficulty she won Judith to consent, and felt some shame at taking thanks which were not due to herself. It was the Commissioner who had asked her to do so much for the sake of old times, and had supplied her with the necessary funds, binding her over to strictest secrecy on the subject, lest Johnson might hear of his action, and punish him effectually for thwarting his plans. It was well she had not mentioned Sir Julius's name, for Judith would certainly have accepted no help from him, but felt less unwillingness to be indebted to a woman.

She had always understood that the Trevors were badly off, but was too unacquainted with the relative stages of poverty to be surprised at the large amount in the pocket book that was given to her. She took from it a sufficient sum, settled with Mrs. Long, and had even made her boxes all ready to go, when another objection occurred to her.

Judith sat herself down on the largest trunk and observed disconsolately that she would not go after all. Mrs. Trevor, who was in front of the looking-glass diligently repairing the damage done to her complexion, turned round and asked, rather sharply, what foolishness was in her head now.

"I ought to have thought of it before, but unhappiness makes one selfish, I believe, or at least it has had that effect on me. You know how people have been talking about me lately—a great many of the people I knew before never even bow when we meet, and it is not fair to go to your house and perhaps throw some of the obloquy on you."

Mrs. Trevor relinquished her occupation, and coming over to her side, took her by the shoulders and shook her.

"You are not to talk such nonsense," she said, severely. "I won't have it, won't listen for a moment! I have been as much discussed as most women in my day, and have done as much to deserve it; but now that I am getting old and ugly—passée in fact—people are beginning to admit there's no harm in me after all. So you see I can afford to risk a little more from people's tongues, and even if I could not I should enjoy setting them at defiance. I have done more than pure devilment over and over again than I am doing now from a better motive!"

"But, if you are reckless, it is all the more reason why I should think for you and refuse to let you do so much for me," urged Judith.

"You are talking like an old woman, and I am old enough to be your mother, though it's not to everyone I would confess it. You have been independent too long; it's time you became obedient. Make haste and get ready. We might walk back and let the luggage follow."

So with a little more persuasion the thing was settled, and the two women set off on foot, Judith lighter-hearted and more hopeful than she had felt for weeks, her step more buoyant, her eyes brighter, in spite or perhaps because of, recent tears.

"We will go round by the post-office if you are not too tired," said Mrs. Trevor, as they went. "I like to put my letters in myself; and this one," touching lightly a very thick missive that she held with her other hand, "may be overweight."

"Your husband is in Burmah still? You must have so much to say to him always," remarked Judith, jumping to a conclusion.

Mrs. Trevor stared a little, then realising the mistake, burst out laughing.

"Oh! that's not for Jack. This is his." Drawing out a stamped half-anna envelope from underneath, she doubled it gingerly between finger and thumb to demonstrate its firmness, and laughed again a little defiantly. "Rather thin, is it not?" she asked, half blushing, and yet with a twinkle in her eye that showed she appreciated the joke, even though it told against herself.

Judith laughed too. She would have laughed at anything just then, so great was the reaction in her mind, the relief after her late anxiety—so intense. She had not grasped the point of the incident until the thicker letter fell to the ground face upwards, revealing the address.

She could not help seeing then it was for Captain Graeme, and Mrs. Trevor knew that she saw it, and the blush deepened on her face as she picked it up.

"Poor Captain Graeme has gone to Meerut for the races. He likes to hear all the station news, so I have written him quite a budget. I hope he'll have the patience to read it through."

Judith did not answer immediately; and to change the subject, Mrs. Trevor pointed in front of her with her parasol.

"Who is that?" she asked, indicating a young man who was walking on ahead.

Something in his manner, or perhaps the well-cut clothes, betrayed him to be a stranger in Jaalpoore, where the golden youth generally disported themselves in riding kit or flannels at that time in the afternoon.

Moreover, Mrs. Trevor, who had rather a keen eye for masculine attractions, decided he had more style, a more distinguished air, than most of the men she had seen about, and her curiosity, simulated at first, became real.

"Who is it?" she repeated, and touched her companion on the arm.

But Judith's eyes were fixed on the young man with a different expression. Something peculiar in his walk, a gesture with his hand as he stopped and accosted a passer-by, filled her with vague expectation that grew to certainty as she gazed.

Her lovely lips were parted, her whole face was bright with anticipated pleasure; and as the stranger turned and saw them, she sprang forward with a low cry.

The next moment he was holding both her hands tightly as though he could never let them go, looking down at her with such unmistakable love, such ardent admiration, that Mrs. Trevor instinctively stepped back, and pretended to look back another way.

"It's always good policy to do as one would be done by," she decided to herself, with a little air of worldly wisdom.

But Judith had already remembered her existence, and pulled her forward impulsively.

"This is Avon, my cousin. Lord Avon, Mrs. Trevor," she explained as introduction, and then turning to him again. "Oh! Dick, Dick, I am so glad to see you!" She was half smiling as she spoke, but the tears were very near as well, and a break in her voice showed him that she had some other cause for emotion; it was something more than mere delight at seeing him that moved her so deeply.

After an interchange of civilities with Mrs. Trevor, he stood looking a little awkward and put out, as men will when they see the woman they love in trouble, and cannot say what they would; they have less power of dissimulation than the other sex, or, perhaps, deeper feelings to conceal. Mrs. Trevor was, however, nothing if not discreet, and with kindly tact released him at once from an uncomfortable position.

"Judith, will you take your cousin straight to the house, and persuade him to stay to dinner, if you can? I will follow, as I have some shopping to do, besides visiting the post-office on the way. I daresay I will not be much later than you."

With a nod and smile she went off, not waiting for the objections which the others

were, in fact, little inclined to make; and at once, when they were alone, Avon caught his cousin's hand, and utterly careless of the people who passed and turned to stare, he kept it in his clasp.

"Now child, tell me all about it," he said, tenderly; "you have been in trouble, I am sure, and it is something serious, I am afraid, for never in the old days have I seen you look so desperately unhappy."

Taking him by the most unfrequented route, and trying to speak calmly, so as not to arouse his wrath against those who had injured her, Judith told him all; how, only an hour before, she had despaired, being without money and without friends, as she believed. And then she asked him how it could have been the last two mails had brought her no letters from her father, and that even her telegram had elicited no reply!

Lord Avon looked very grave as he replied,—

"That is partly the reason I have come. The fact is, Judith, I have not properly carried out your last injunctions, though honestly I tried to do my best. When I saw your father (at his office) he would never let me go to his rooms, and it was not until nearly a month ago I discovered the reason. Ever since that crash came it appears that his one idea has been to save money to pay off the creditors, and out of his wretched salary he regularly paid by a certain sum, spending just enough to keep body and soul together, and slaving almost as hard by night at extra work he managed to get as in the day.

"Of course, he broke down at last, and it was then I discovered why. He was seriously ill at first—a sharp, short attack to which we feared he might succumb; but now he is quite out of danger, and only in need of careful nursing, which he gets. My mother has carried him off to the Riviera, as she herself has been unwell, and not equal to the fatigue of a season; and they sent me to fetch you, and say they do not know how they got on without you, and indeed I do not know either."

"It has been as hard for me. I never knew how dependent I was on you all until I left and had to stand alone," she admitted, tearfully.

He looked at her intently, and saw in her face more than she supposed. There was a soft light in her eyes, a tremulous quiver of her lips that he had never noticed before, more heart in her whole expression; and, vastly as he admired her in this new mood, Avon was sensible of a sharp pang, realising at once that it could not have been for him that the statue had turned to living, loving woman, not through him that his Undine had awakened at last from girlish dreams of independence, and found her soul.

His voice was harder, his manner more constrained, as he went on,—

"Another reason for my coming, scarcely less urgent, was to catch that fellow Collett. Is he still here?"

"I saw him yesterday."

"Then he is as good as captured. I am armed with proofs, and moreover, have a detective in plain clothes acting as my valet, who knows him well, and has something else against him. He is following us now."

"He will be sent to prison of course?" she hazarded.

"Not a doubt of it. Twenty years' penal, at least!"

All Judith's late vindictiveness faded now her revenge was in her grasp. She only remembered that he had loved her—honestly loved her, whatever his other faults; and a feeling of pity conquered her resentment for ever.

She knew, too, or guessed, that if he were found out he would involve the Commissioner in his ruin, and she could not forget that he was Winifred's father. Moreover, that he had sent a friend to her in her need.

"Dick, will you do something to please

me?" she asked, softly, just touching his coat sleeve with her gloved fingers, and looking pleadingly into his eyes.

"I would do a very great deal, Judith," he replied.

"Then let him go free. It is only right that he should restore to my father all of which he robbed him. Put as much pressure on him to do that as you please, but don't prosecute him; let him go. He will suffer sufficiently as it is."

Again he surveyed her critically, wondering if it could possibly be that she loved this man for whom she so sweetly pleaded.

It seemed strange if it were so, but that women were strange he knew; they had always been beyond his comprehension.

Never dreaming what turn his thoughts had taken, his cousin continued—

"And, Dick, make him promise not to trouble Sir Julius Sherston any more. Make him give up the hold he has upon him. Sir Julius was always good to me, and I loved Winifred very much."

"It shall be as you wish, dear," he answered, quietly.

The endearing epithet slipped out without his knowledge, but Judith started when she heard it, then took it as a sign that he cared for her no longer, since his tone had been matter-of-fact, and his manner, after his first impulsive greeting, colder than she had ever known it to be, and more composed.

Stealing a shy glance into his face, she decided he looked older, manlier, even better-looking, than she had deemed him formerly, though he had always been considered handsome by others.

His eyes, which she had often remembered as the truest she had ever seen, were unchanged in their expression—steadfast as ever, and as kind.

She thought the sunburn became him vastly, too, but dropped her eyes incontinently as he caught her gaze and smiled.

At the same moment they reached Mrs. Trevor's door.

"You will come in?" she asked, timidly.

"Not to-night. It is absolutely necessary I should clinch the Collett affair at once, before he gets wind of my arrival. I will come to-morrow to tell you what I have done. Don't let me keep you standing; you look so white, Judith, and so tired. Good-bye!"

He took the hand she gave him, and held it longer than, perhaps, was absolutely necessary, yet there was no lover-like pressure, no fond lingering over the farewell, as there had been so many times before.

As he left her, and strode away in the direction of the Sherston's house (not looking once behind him, though she stood there waiting for a backward glance), Judith sighed, for even in this first delight at the ending of all her troubles she was conscious of a cold chill of disappointment.

In her heart she had counted upon his love as a thing she might fall back upon at any time; and, now that it had failed, she knew how precious it might have been.

No better man had ever come within her ken; no one quite so reliable, so worthy of a woman's love; no one so handsome, so true, so dear!

And she had lost him!

Sighing, she turned and went into the house; and, in spite of the promised happy change in the circumstances of her life, she cried herself to sleep.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Lord Avon came early the next morning to report progress.

He had met Johnson the night before, and only left him in charge of the detective to decide whether he would agree to the terms that had been explained to him, as they were the only ones that would be accepted.

Avon was on his way now for his reply, but spared a few minutes to see his cousin on the way, during which time she told him, in a

few words, the story of Gerald Sherston, and asked if anything could be done to help him.

Promising to do his best, he hurried away.

Then the whole long day remained for Judith to wait and wonder how things would be in the end, and whether, even if she gained all that had been lost to her before—the wealth and comfort, the knowledge that her father was honoured and revered, she herself taking her old high place—whether all this would console and compensate her for that which, by her own folly, she had missed.

For a woman to love where her love can never be returned is surely a very cruelty of pain; but there is an added bitterness in the cup which she must drink to the dregs—when it has been once rejected, and only valued when too late for the error to be repaired.

It was clear enough to Judith now that Avon had always been first in her heart, only when he wooed her she had been inaccessible to such vows and words, believing herself to be above all need of love.

Very gradually her soul had awakened to the knowledge that she was as other women were, with a longing ever greater than theirs, because so long repressed for sympathy and support; and while she was realising how she missed the constant devotion of her cousin another stepped in, and turned all the yearning tenderness of thought towards himself.

Even when she fancied she cared for St. Quentin most, in the innermost recess of her mind there had been a reservation which might have told her, had she possessed more experience, that her feelings were less deeply engaged than she supposed, since in real passion there is no reason, no reservation of any sort.

Afterwards, when she began to see the man as he was—weak, shallow, and inconstant—the pain she naturally felt was dulled by scorn, and comforted by the belief that one, at least, was steadfast, though all others failed her; and, in the thought of his faithfulness, the sense of sorrow at this other lover's defection lessened, and altogether died away.

Always she had contrasted the two men—one so strong and reliable, the other fascinating, it is true, but false from the beginning in his relations with her; and, even when most dazzled by the last, her judgment had always inclined to her first lover, and, in the light of his perfections, the poor society graces and tricks to please, which, to the other, were a second nature, grew dim and paltry in seeming as they were in fact.

Slowly but surely her heart had followed the guidance of her head, until all memory that such prompting had been required faded away, and she was now as hopelessly in love as any woman could be, the very strength on which she had prided herself acting against her as she gave up her whole soul in utter abandonment to the new emotion that possessed it.

Trembling, and passion-pale, she waited Avon's coming in the evening all alone in the pretty sitting-room, with its rosy-shaded lights and masses of scented flowers, where Mrs. Trevor had left her. But when, at last, he came—nearly an hour after the time he had himself appointed—she grew chilled at his grave demeanour, the air of cold politeness with which he took her hand and immediately dropped it.

Some hope there must have been in her heart, though to herself she had denied it, or she could not have felt such cruel disappointment.

Blind to the happiness that was just within his grasp, Lord Avon began to tell her of his success, which had been complete.

Arrangements had been made for her father's fortune to be refunded almost in its entirety, and a vindication of his honour dictated, written, and signed.

Sir Julius Sherston might also rest in peace for the future, since a solemn promise had been extracted from his tormentor to trouble him no more.

Johnson, alias Collett, alias Straughan, was left free, though comparatively poor, and with no chance of levying blackmail any more, as he had done ruthlessly in the past.

Yet that he would rise again seemed more than likely, as he had great buoyancy of nature, and sufficient cleverness always to deceive the many who were less amply gifted than himself.

Another piece of news there was to tell that made his listener's eyes glisten gratefully, and a faint colour came into her cheeks.

A letter had been despatched to Gerald Sherston, offering him the agency of Lord Aron's country estate, where, his past history unknown and his native connections hand-somely pensioned off, he could start a new career, and be honoured and liked as he was before, in youth's madness, he made such shipwreck of his prospects.

"How good you are!" cried Judith, enthusiastic in her thanks.

"The goodness was all yours. I only did what I thought would please you."

"And it has pleased me. It will please Mrs. Trevor too, and she has been so kind."

"What had Mrs. Trevor to do with him?" in some surprise.

"He loved her, and she jilted him, then he went all wrong. I never heard the whole story."

"Not a very uncommon one, I daresay. You women have much to answer for."

"The unusual accent of bitterness in his tones startled her. She looked up and saw something in his face she had never seen there before—a hard expression, that had yet something of pain in it, pain so intense that, missing the clue to it, she grew awed, and was afraid to speak."

He, too, said no more, but returned her questioning gaze with mournful emphasis; and at last the silence between them became so pregnant with meaning that he put an end to it by asking, with a half-laugh—

"Whether her taste in dogs had not deteriorated since they parted?"

Turning, she saw Dandy, lying at full length, with his nose between his paws, surveying the stranger distrustfully with his pink-rimmed eyes, and certainly not looking either handsome or well.

"It was Winifred's; I shall keep it all my life!" she said, a little brokenly, perhaps glad of this vent to her emotion, for it was hard to show no feeling at all, with her heart so full of love and sorrow.

The tears gathered in her eyes as much with self-pity as regret for her friend, when Avon stooped and took the little dog on to his knees, caressing it by fits and starts as they talked.

"And the politics, Dick? Are they progressing?" she asked, presently. Again he broke into a laugh, not a very merry one.

"Fairly well. My speeches were always reported at length, but they were criticised terribly by the opposition papers. Once or twice I was asked to give my authority for certain statements, but that I refused to do, of course."

"It would have been rather infra dig. to say 'Gossip Judith' helped me, would it not? And, after all, perhaps I gave you wrong impressions."

"I hope not, for I always passed them on as they came to me, neither adding nor detracting from them one iota. I spoke up manfully for the oppressed and mild Anglo-Indian, and condemned unmercifully the overbearing Hindoo."

"Oh, the Mussulmans are far worse," she interrupted.

"I'll remember that next session. I assure you, the whole House was moved when I drew a picture in most vivid colours of how an impudent wretch in the bazaar refused to mend a lovely lady's boot until he knew the exact sum she meant to give in remuneration."

"How stupid you are!" she laughed, and again the conversation languished.

There was a want of harmony between them, a jarring note, of which neither had ever been conscious before, though once the love had been all on one side, and now it was equally divided, while only a word, only a glance, was needed to ensure their happiness.

Still they stood apart, though in each heart was a yearning wish to come together; his arms hungry to enfold her, she only longing to lay her head upon his breast and sob out all the love and sorrow.

He had been seated opposite to her, with his stick tracing patterns on the carpet, his head down bent. Now he jerked it back impatiently, and, with a half-strangled sigh, which nevertheless, she heard and echoed, he rose and went over to the window.

She watched him wistfully, longing to say something, anything to release them both from a false position, yet afraid of saying too much.

It was dawning on her gradually that he loved her still, had never changed, as she feared at first, and that, if he could only guess how it was with her, all might yet be well.

Yet how to let him know, how to betray a secret which it is a woman's instinct to guard as jealously as her life?

Her sweet, blue eyes grew big with tears, her lip quivered piteously. There was nothing of the heroine about her then, no trace of her beautiful namesake in the Eastern story. It was a loving, timid girl who half-stretched out her hands, and would have spoken, had he not turned and remarked, hurriedly—

"There is something else we must arrange, Judith—this going back—. You must have a chaperone, I suppose? Do you know anyone who is going to Brindisi?"

She shook her head; her hands had fallen meekly to her sides, the lids had dropped over her eyes, but still she was afraid to trust her voice.

"Would Mrs. Trevor come?" he asked again.

"I am afraid not. She is not very well off, you know."

"But, under the circumstances, do you not think we might arrange to defray her expenses?"

"It would be impossible, I am sure. She has taken a house in Simla, and her husband, she hopes, is coming back from Burmah this month or next. Besides, it would be difficult to make such a proposal to her."

"I suppose you are right," he admitted, dolefully, and then took to pacing the room, to the imminent danger of sundry rather unsteady small tables, on which were trustfully reposing vases of flowers and other breakable ornaments.

Suddenly a thought struck her that made the blood fly to her face, and her fingers meet in a nervous grasp.

She looked so radiantly lovely, as she looked up and half-whispered his name, that he came closer and sat down beside her.

"What is it, Judith? You understand that you and I cannot go together?" he asked, wondering why she trembled so, and would not meet his gaze.

"How did you and father propose I should go?" she counter-questioned, softly, and her heart beat painfully in suspense as she waited for the reply.

His sudden start showed her that the suspicion which had prompted the question was unfounded.

"It was all a mistake," he answered, awkwardly. "We thought—or, rather, he thought—but it was all a mistake, so what's the good of talking of it now?"

"I would like to know," she persisted, yet in tones so low that he had to stoop and lean towards her to hear them.

"We thought it was foolish, of course, and quite unwarrantable, that in your last letters you had noticed a change. You wrote as if you wanted us and were unhappy, and so

much more kindly to me, that I may be forgiven if I began to hope again, seeing that to win you was my one chance of happiness, and hard to relinquish."

She made no comment; her head was turned away in displeasure, as he thought.

He had despaired too long to gather any hope from the crimson tip of one small ear, and the fluttering of the small, white hands as they lay on her dark gown.

"It was madness, of course, but your father encouraged me in it, and perhaps I needed no encouragement at all. He said, 'Go and marry her out of hand, and bring her here to get my blessing.' You may believe I required no second bidding. And all the journey through I dreamed dreams, until hope grew certainty, and I thought I had only to see you and all would come right. Then we met, and I knew at once it was a different Judith stood before me—a little older, a little sadder, but so infinitely more sweet, that I longed to clasp you to my breast, to kiss your dear lips until at last they kissed me in return. Forgive me; I have no right to speak like this. I was not long in realising my mistake. I had not been ten minutes in your companionship before I saw that you had changed, but not for me. And yesterday I heard the confirmation of my fears. It is someone else you love!"

"Oh, Dick!" she cried, in passionate reproach.

It was only an ejaculation, but, coming straight from her heart, it carried conviction in its tone, and her sweet eyes, all suffused with feeling, told their own story.

He could doubt no longer, fear never again, though in very luxuriousness of delight he asked, softly, while his arm stole round her waist, his very heart stopping for one long second to wait for her reply—

"Judith, is it me?"

"It is you—all you!" she whispered back.

[THE END.]

THE GRACE OF COURTESY

We find a great many men and women side-tracked all along the pathways of life because they were not taught the value of good manners and of a fine, gracious courtesy in their youths, save Success. The result is that they have grown up hard and coarse and repulsive in manner, and have not been able to win favour or attract trade or business. In other words, their bad manners and repulsive ways have kept them back and handicapped their careers.

It is astonishing how fine manners and politeness in children develop into ease and attractiveness in manhood and womanhood. Other things being equal, the employe who is selected for advancement is the one with good manners, a fine, gracious demeanour, a good presence; these qualities are the best kind of capital, even better than money.

Agreeable deportment, coupled with good education and ability, will often win where capital in the hands of the boorish, the unattractive, and the ill-natured will fail. In fact, agreeable deportment is the one indispensable quality sought after everywhere. There is nothing else which will so quickly open the door to opportunities, to society, to the hearts of all. Courtesy is to business and society what oil is to machinery. It makes things run smoothly, for it eliminates the jar and the friction and the nerve-racking noise. There is a great moral quality in fine manners, refining the character, as a rule, and making it more harmonious, with less that grates and rasps and exasperates.

"ONE can't be too careful in this world," said the man who regards himself as remarkably wise. "Yes, we can," answered Mrs. Courtessell. "If Josh hadn't of been stoppin' every ten or fifteen minutes to count his money while he was in town, that gold brick man wouldn't of seen how much he had."

ALETHEA'S ORDEAL

CHAPTER I.

WYCHERLY CASTLE was a grand, picturesque mansion, built, as its name implied, in the castellated style, but with vast improvements upon the dwellings of feudal times. Its design was not altogether uniform, more than one architect having been employed upon it, and the lives of several owners having intervened between its foundation and completion. Yet the general effect was not inharmonious, and, while its aspect was full of massiveness and solidity, it was eminently graceful and attractive.

Its lordly portion fronted a wide and stately avenue, shaded by magnificent trees; its oriel windows were most elaborately finished, and its square towers rose gradually and proudly above the central edifice, commanding a fine view of the neighbouring country, which contained within a small area all the most charming features of English scenery.

There was a park of considerable extent belonging to the estate, besides noble farms, plantations, mimic lakes, broad meadows intersected by a winding brook, and clear ponds that reposed within marble statuary that seemed to look eagerly and wonderingly into their translucent depths.

The present owner and occupant of the castle was Lady Leopold Wycherly, the only child of the late Leopold Wycherly, Earl of Templecombe.

It was a lovely morning in June.

In a luxurious morning room in the eastern tower of the castle sat the proprietress of the estate, in company with her aunt and guardian, the Hon. Alethea Wycherly.

A glass door, now opened wide, gave egress upon the smooth lawn and adjacent flower-gardens; and balmy odours, mingled with the songs of birds, and the busy hum of bees, filled the room with fragrance and music.

The vagrant sunbeams entered too, and strayed over the face and form of Lady Leopold, lighting up her rare and glorious beauty with a halo of splendour.

She was about eighteen years of age, of medium height, queenly in her bearing, yet exquisitely graceful and facile in all her movements. Her complexion was delicately fair; her hair was of the hue of pale gold, so rich and lustrous that it seemed spun of the precious metal; and her eyes were like purple panes, velvety in their softness, yet capable of sparkling and flashing beneath their long black lashes.

This contrast between her eyebrows and lashes and her glittering hair was a peculiarity inherited from her late father; and, having the effect of mingled snow and fire, it gave a charming piquancy to her lovely face, and distinguished her from the ordinary beauties of society.

Her aunt, the Hon. Alethea, was not yet thirty years old, stately and magnificent, with commanding beauty; yet so cold that she seemed a human iceberg. She rarely smiled and never laughed, and her proud, calm eyes seemed quite unused to tears. She looked incapable of human emotions, was always haughty and reserved; yet, impassable as she was, she was not without suitors, her wealth perhaps serving as an antidote to her coldness.

She had not always been as now.

Lady Leopold remembered her as a frank and merry maiden, with impulsive ways and a sunny temper that made everyone happy around her.

But this memory was faint and indistinct, their lives having been quite separate and different until within a few years.

The father of Lady Leopold, the brother of Miss Alethea, had died when his daughter, motherless from her birth, had scarcely at-

tained her third year, and, by his will, her childhood and early youth had been passed in the pleasant home of a country rector, who had been a cherished friend of the Earl of Templecombe. This rector, with the assistance of his wife and able masters, had instructed his noble ward in all accomplishments, as well as in the more solid branches of learning, not forgetting to cultivate the lofty and generous qualities with which nature had liberally endowed her.

At the age of fifteen she was, by the directions of her father's will, resigned to the charge of her youngest aunt, the late Earl's favourite sister, who took her to the castle, where they had since resided together.

Miss Alethea had entered society at an early age, under the chaperonage of a married sister, had been abroad several times, and it was from one of these tours on the Continent that she had returned changed, frozen, as it were; the smile gone from her lip, the merry light from her eyes, the laughter from her voice, and with a sternness and laughtiness of bearing that effectually checked all inquiries from her wondering and startled friends.

To Lady Leopold it seemed as if there were some deep mystery in her aunt's past life, and this suspicion had received so much confirmation that it had become to her a positive certainty.

But what this mystery was she could not even imagine.

The only being who appeared to be in Miss Wycherly's confidence was her sister, who had accompanied her abroad, and she was as impenetrable and reserved as Miss Alethea herself.

There had been a silence of several minutes between Lady Leopold and her aunt, the elder lady abstractedly watching the shadows on the lawn, and the younger meditating upon the statue-like coldness of her aunt's face.

Miss Wycherly at length broke the silence, saying, in measured tones:

"I fear you will find the Castle dull this summer, my dear, after your gay season in town. Would you not like to visit a watering-place?"

"No, Aunt Alethea, for I know you would prefer remaining at home," was the reply. "You know how often you were obliged to run up to the Castle from town last winter, and, since you are so much attached to our home, I would rather remain here."

A faint tinge of colour crept into Miss Wycherly's cheeks at this allusion to her frequent visits home during the gay season, visits to which most trivial and insufficient excuses had been assigned, and she said, coldly:

"Very well, Leo. Do as you choose. But your father entrusted you to my care at this period of your life, believing that I would introduce you into society, and I shall hardly feel that I am doing my duty by you if I keep you shut up here like a nun. How would you like to fill the Castle with guests?"

"Better than anything else, Aunt Alethea," and the girl's eyes sparkled with pleasure. "There are charming rides and drives about here, delightful boating, and opportunities for every pleasure that can be indulged in anywhere. I should especially like Feodora and Emily Braithwaite, and their mother, and Lady Ellen Haigh, to come."

"I like your choice of young ladies, Leo. There must be an equal number of gentlemen, and, of course, we must include among them your cousin, the present Earl of Templecombe. He is a bachelor, still young, and your admirer, so it will never do to neglect him. What other gentlemen do you desire to invite?"

"I suppose it will be necessary to include Sir Wilton Werner—the Earl's intimate friend! Vane goes nowhere without him!"

Lady Leopold glanced archly, as she spoke,

at her aunt, Sir Wilton Werner being an avowed admirer and suitor of Miss Wycherly.

Miss Alethea bowed assent, not noticing the glance, and requested her niece to continue the list.

The maiden hesitated, blushing confusedly, and at length stammered:

"We ought certainly to invite Basil Montmaur, Aunt Alethea—"

"But I am not sure that Vane likes him," observed Miss Wycherly, doubtfully.

"Because, if he were to die without issue, Basil would succeed him in the title!" declared Lady Leopold, earnestly. "As a distant cousin, Basil ought not to be passed over, auntie. Besides, we are by no means sure that Vane does dislike him!"

"You are right, Leo. And if they are not friends they may become so, under your influence. If you choose, you may write the invitations to-day. The matter is quite settled, I hope!"

Lady Leopold nodded gaily, and, while her aunt lapsed into silence, she sat down in front of her pretty inlaid desk and busied herself with notes of invitation, appending to each her aunt's name.

When finished, they met the approbation of Miss Wycherly, and were despatched by a servant to be posted immediately at the village a mile distant, one of Lady Leopold's characteristics being promptitude.

The Hon. Alethea was not at all social in her temperament, as has been implied, and soon withdrew to her own apartments, leaving her niece to amuse herself.

This task was not at all difficult to Leopold, who was accustomed to amuse herself for hours in the grand old library, or the picture gallery, or the conservatory, or the castle grounds.

On this occasion her tastes inclined to the latter, and she rang for her attendant, a coquettish affair of straw and ribbons, caught up the floating train of her white cambric morning-dress and sauntered out upon the lawn, going towards the flower-gardens.

The head gardener greeted her with a very low bow and a pleasant smile, for every servant and retainer upon the estate admired and loved their gentle young mistress, and called her attention to the size and beauty of the flowers, and to a variety, in particular, which he had created.

Lady Leopold bestowed unstinted praise upon them all, discriminating sufficiently in favour of the gardener's production to plange him into a fever of delight, received some choice floral specimens at his hands, which she fastened in her corsage, and then strolled idly towards the park.

On the way thither she paused at a fountain, where bronze Naiads were playfully tossing in the sunlit glittering clouds of spray, and threw the flowers that remained in her hands into the basin, watching with pleasure their revival in the cool water.

And then she continued her walk to the edge of the park, making her way to her favourite retreat, a pretty, secluded grotto under the shade and protection of spreading trees.

This grotto was beautifully ornamented with shells, many of them of great beauty and lustre, flushed with the opaline glows of tropic skies. It was furnished in Oriental style, and contained a few books and a guitar.

Lady Leopold paused at the entrance, with an expression of astonishment on her countenance, for, upon a pile of cushions, his face concealed from view, lay a young man in an attitude of despair.

Uncertain whether to retreat quietly or order the audacious intruder to depart, the maiden lingered a moment on the threshold. Then she turned to go.

In doing so her dress brushed against a book which lay carelessly upon a low hassock, and the noise it made in falling aroused the intruder, who sprang to his feet.

Despite the pallor of his face and the anguished look in his eyes, he was eminently

handsome and noble in appearance. Tall and slender, with a princely air, dark in eyes, hair, and complexion, his mobile mouth had a sensitive quiver that betokened keen sensibilities and fine feelings, while his other features as plainly declared that he was not wanting in courage, bravery, firmness, and all those virtues that characterise the grand heroes of every age and nation.

Lady Leopolde grew pale under his accusing look, exclaiming with a frightened look:

"Basil! You here! I thought you were in London!"

"Leopolde!" he responded, with bitter emphasis. "Yes, I am here. No wonder you grow pale at beholding me! False as you are fair, I have come to bid you an eternal farewell!"

"What do you mean, Basil?" faltered the maiden, sinking upon a pile of cushions near at hand.

"I mean that I am going to the Continent—to India—Australia—anywhere! I have come, Leopolde, to look upon your face for the last time! Heaven help me! I could not go without seeing your face once more!"

Lady Leopolde looked stunned at this announcement; her lips quivered, and a look almost of terror crept into her eyes. Endeavouring to appear unmoved, she said—

"Why must you leave England, Basil? You are rich—"

"Yes, I am rich," responded Basil Montmaur, bitterly—"rich in gold, but poor, poorer than a beggar in friends!"

"Why, Basil? You are always surrounded by gentlemen who admire and esteem you, and nearly everyone likes you. Are not Aunt Alethea and I your true friends?"

"Aunt Alethea is as friendly to me as is yonder marble statue!" declared Basil, "And you, Leopolde, are false—false—"

The sentence died away in a groan. Lady Leopolde's fingers worked nervously together, but her voice was sweet and even as usual as she said, drawing herself up, with maidenly dignity—

"That is a second time you have called me false, Basil. Be kind enough to explain yourself. To whom am I false? What promise have I ever broken?"

"True, Leopolde, you never made me any promise, but I thought we understood each other. You have long known that I love you, although I did not put the feeling into words, and I believed that you loved me, although you never told me so. You permitted me to attend you very often last winter; you accepted the bouquets I sent you; and, more, the Christmas gift I clasped upon your arm. You blushed under my glances, and never rebuked me when I pressed your hands with involuntary tenderness. Oh, Leopolde!"

A scarlet flush tinted the girl's cheeks, even touching her tiny, well-shaped ears, as she listened to this address, and, when her lover paused, she said, softly—

"Well, Basil?"

"Was it well?" he cried, impetuously. "Was it well to wreck my young life, my ardent hopes, my happiness, to gratify your taste for conquest?"

An indignant denial of the charge burst from her lips.

"Then I have deceived myself—or you once loved me, Leopolde! Was it ambition that induced you to throw me aside for your new lover, the Earl of Templecombe? Did his higher rank, his greater possessions, outweigh the love of Basil Montmaur in your mind?"

"I do not understand you, Basil," answered Leopolde, simply. "I have a right to be indignant at your strange accusation, I think. Vane is my cousin and the present Earl of Templecombe, and I cannot do otherwise than treat him with proper civility. But you are also my cousin, more distant, it is true, but you are a Wycherly, and I have always remembered the fact, and treated you with as much consideration as I have accorded to Vane!"

"I have not noticed whether you measured to me precisely the same amount of civility you bestowed upon Vane," said Montmaur, sarcastically. "My cause of grief is that, after all I have hoped and dreamed, I should find my love for you slighted, and should learn of your betrothal to another from your favoured suitor instead of yourself!"

Leopolde looked puzzled, and insisted upon further explanation, which Basil calmed himself sufficiently to give.

"Last evening," he said, "I was in my rooms in town, thinking of you and planning to run up here and end the suspense of months by asking you to become my wife. I was assuring myself that I need not fear, that you had not discouraged my attentions—as, with your supposed uprightness, I was certain you would have done if you had not regarded them favourably—when Lord Templecombe entered. He has long suspected or known my sentiments towards you, and, while maintaining an outward friendship as relatives, we have secretly regarded each other as rivals. He came into my room smiling and joyful, and asked me to congratulate him upon his approaching marriage with you, avowing that the engagement would not be divulged to anyone but me for some months yet. I was tempted to rush somewhere last night, away from my country and you, but I could not go without a last look at the face that has lured me on to my misery!"

Lady Leopolde, far from being offended at these words, looked pityingly at her despairing lover, and said, blushing—

"Vane exceeded the truth in his statement, Basil. He has not yet offered me his hand, nor have I accepted him. He wrote to Aunt Alethea a day or two since for permission to pay me his addresses, and Auntie, who likes him very much, granted it, without asking me whether I liked Vane or not. She preferred that he should ask for himself."

"Is that all?" cried Basil, his countenance beaming with joy. "You are not engaged to marry him, Leopolde? Will you listen to what I have so longed to tell you?"

Considering her confusion as assent, he poured forth, in eager, impassioned tones, the story of his love, that ardent love that beamed from his dark eyes, and spoke from every noble feature.

When, at length, he stopped, he listened tremblingly for a response.

The only one he received was a shy, happy smile, as Lady Leopolde drooped her eyes in modest confusion; but it was enough, and he caught her to his breast with a burst of emotion that was all the stronger from his revelation of feeling, and she nestled there as if it were her rightful home.

The Hon. Basil Montmaur, with the large fortune he had inherited from his maternal grandfather, whose name he had assumed in place of his rightful patronymic, was no ineligible match for even Lady Leopolde. He was her relative, although the relationship was so distant that it might not have been recognised at all had the family connection been larger, and more lives stood between him and his succession to the family title, and the young couple had, therefore, nothing to fear from the disapprobation of friends.

There was a blissful silence between them, during which they grew to understand the thoughts of each other without putting them into words, but it was at length broken by the happy lover, who said—

"It was an inspiration that brought me here this morning, my darling, and led you to me. It seems hardly possible that I have won the prize for which Vane and the rest have struggled. I am anxious to proclaim our engagement to the world, that I may feel sure that you are all my own. Let us hasten to Miss Alethea—"

"Not yet, Basil," said Leopolde, gently. "You know that I love you, and, knowing it, I am sure you will consent to keep our engagement a secret for the present, even from Aunt Alethea!"

"A secret, darling?"

"Yes, Basil. Auntie proposes filling the Castle with company, and the invitations were despatched just before I came to the grotto—to yourself, to Vane, to Sir Wilton, to the Misses Braithwaite, and Lady Ellen Haigh. It will be pleasanter for our guests, as well as for me, if we defer the announcement of our betrothal until after their visit. Don't you think so?"

Basil assented, although a cloud of disappointment mantled his features.

"It shall be as you desire, darling," he said, gravely. "I will endeavour not to monopolise your time when your guests shall have come, and I am sure you will not give me pain by allowing others to do so!"

"Certainly not, you dear, jealous Basil," replied Lady Leopolde, merrily. "Do you know I am going to send you back to town as secretly as you have come, for, if Aunt Alethea were to see you to-day she would suspect our secret? You must return to the castle in due time with proper pomp and ceremony."

Basil agreed to obey these directions implicitly, and said that if he were to take the next train to town he must set out immediately for the station.

Clasping her closer in his arms, he gazed steadily into the depths of her luminous eyes, finding there treasures of truth and love, and then he pressed a long betrothal kiss upon her lips, murmured a few words of rapture, and reluctantly departed, going through the park towards the distant railway station.

And Lady Leopold sat in the entrance of her fairy-like grotto, weaving happy dreams, and wondering if her joy could ever lessen, and if life would ever look less bright to her.

CHAPTER II.

The Aftons, of Afton Grange, in one of the Southern counties, were a race of sturdy yeomen who had owned their comfortable farm for more than two centuries, and who had always been distinguished among their neighbours for their family pride. This trait had not been unwarrantable, for the sons had been brave and honest, so that the name of Afton had ever been synonymous with integrity, and the daughters had ever been noted for their beauty and virtue.

But a shadow had at length fallen upon the family.

Where they had once been courted by their neighbours, they were now passed by with a slight nod, as their claim to popular respect had dissipated; where once they had taken the chief place at county festivities, they were now scarcely invited. The hospitable rooms of the Grange no longer echoed to the tread of dancing feet and merry voices, nor was its drawing-room often invaded by visitors from the neighbouring village or the surrounding country.

This change, so galling to their pride, had taken place during the lifetime of the present generation of Aftons.

The family had almost dwindled away, it being represented only by Mrs. Afton, a widow past her sixtieth year, her son Alick, a man of forty, and Mrs. Afton's granddaughter, a girl of seventeen.

Grief and disappointment had made of the mistress of Afton Grange a grim, sour old woman, with abrupt manners and peremptory ways. There was nothing feminine about her save her apparel, and she divided with her son the oversight of the farm, the superintendence of the servants, etc., as a man might have done.

In her early life she had been very fond of dress and society, and she still indulged in the former passion, although she had been forced to deprive herself of the latter, for where she could not be first she would not be anything.

On the same bright June morning upon which the events recorded in the preceding chapter had occurred, Mrs. Afton entered her

drawing-room, where she sat in state every day, although the neighbouring ladies no longer came to admire her grand ways, as once they had done, drew up the green shutters, and seated herself in her favourite arm-chair.

Her next movement was to dispatch a servant in quest of her granddaughter, demanding her immediate attendance.

It being afternoon Mrs. Afton was attired in a rich, old-fashioned brocade, that had done duty many a time on former days, when she had been someone of consequence, and she wore a cap or real lace, yellow with age, besides a watch and chain of antique patters and remarkable size, the watch hanging ostentatiously at her side, with its broad open face turned to the beholder.

From the window by which she sat she commanded a view of the wide fields, where the labourers were busy at work, her son's stalwart form prominent amongst them as he directed their labours; but the rigid lines about her mouth did not in the least relax at the sight of him or of the goodly possessions of which he was master.

She became absorbed in her own thoughts, her gaze wandering towards a large old farmhouse, just visible to the westward beyond the Afton fields, and towering above the Afton orchards, and from her longing expression it might have been thought that she regarded that dwelling somewhat as an ark of refuge.

It was tenanted by Hugh Fauld, a bachelor of her son's age, who alone, of all her former friends, now accorded her the respectful deference she had once claimed as a right.

She was aroused from her contemplation of the chimneys of his dwelling by the opening and shutting of the door, and she turned, with a slight unbending from her usual sternness, to regard the newcomer, her granddaughter, and bid her be seated upon a cushion at her feet.

The young girl quietly obeyed.

She was a fair young creature, who amply sustained the reputation for beauty of the female Aftons, but her loveliness differed from theirs. Dark hair and eyes had always characterised the family, but her eyes were of a deep dark blue, shaded by golden lashes, and her hair looked like pale woven sunbeams. Her complexion was fair, her movements full of untutored grace, her hands and feet of aristocratic shape and size, and, altogether, she looked like a being reared in the midst of wealth and luxury. Refined and intelligent her face declared her; but she had grown up like the field flowers, unloved and uncared for. She had been gifted with a thirst for knowledge, and had found means to gratify it, so that she had acquired a good and thorough, if irregular, education.

She bore the name of Natalie Afton.

"What have you been doing to-day, Natalie?" asked her grandmother, more to open conversation than from a desire to be made acquainted with the young girl's pursuits.

Natalie looked surprised at this sudden display of interest in her, but replied—

"I have been reading and studying, grandmother, and have played a little upon that old piano up in the attic. I have learned to play several tunes from those old books. What was my mother's name, grandmother?"

The question was asked with sudden eagerness, as if the young girl had thought much on the subject, and but just found courage to give her thoughts expression.

Mrs. Afton frowned, and her manner became even more harsh than usual, as she responded—

"Don't ask silly questions, Natalie. Why do you wish to know?"

Because in some of the old music books I found the name of Amy Afton, and I wondered who she was. Was she my aunt?"

The old woman did not immediately reply.

She had never talked confidently with Natalie, had never spoken to her of her parents, and her son had been as reserved as herself. The girl, in her childish longings to know something of her parents, had sometimes questioned the old farm servants, but they had answered only by a shake of the head, and a reproof for her inquiry, as if it had been unnatural and wrong. She had no childish friends, no youthful companions. The daughters of the neighbouring yeomanry avoided her as if she carried with her the plague, and their brothers followed their example, although their glances expressed their admiration of the beautiful Natalie when by chance they encountered her.

She had thus grown up perfectly isolated, knowing nothing of her origin, save that her grim guardians were her grandmother and uncle, and the anxiety with which she ventured to question Mrs. Afton may therefore be imagined.

"Was 'Amy-Afton' my aunt, grandmother?" she repeated.

"No; she was your mother!" was the harsh rejoinder.

"My mother!" exclaimed Natalie, sighing. "Then she was your daughter-in-law, grandmother? What was her maiden name?"

"Amy Afton!" answered the old woman, her voice grown sterner than ever. "I do not wish to rake up my family history for your amusement. I summoned you to me for an entirely different purpose. Our neighbour, Mr. Fauld, called upon me yesterday."

"He comes very often," said Natalie, innocently, as her grandmother paused to give effect to the announcement.

"He does, child, and he has reason. He came yesterday to state to me that he is willing—nay, anxious—to marry you, and that he desires an immediate union with you!"

Mirth and scorn mingled in Natalie's expression as she exclaimed—

"Willing to marry me! He chooses strange

words. Does he think he has only to declare himself willing to take me and I shall drop into his arms, fainting with joy! You can tell him, grandmother, that I'm much obliged to him for the resignation he expresses, but that I'm equally 'willing' he should marry someone else!"

"Natalie!" cried Mrs. Afton, in a shocked tone.

"Why, grandmother," pursued the girl, laughingly, not heeding her relative's anger, if she noticed it, "Hugh Fauld is as old as Uncle Alick. He has visited here ever since I can remember. I like him well enough as an elderly friend, and would advise him to transfer his affections to a woman of his own age. But he didn't mention his affections, did he?"

"Natalie, is this the respect with which you receive his offer of marriage? Where is your gratitude?"

"Gratitude, grandmother?" cried the girl, with an arch look at her own reflection in the small mirror opposite. "Why should I be grateful to an old bachelor like Hugh Fauld because he wants me for his wife? Do you think no one else will care for me?"

She blushed intensely as she asked that question—as if, if pressed to do so, she could name someone as appreciative of her fresh young beauty as Hugh Fauld.

"No respectable person will ever want to marry you," responded Mrs. Afton, severely, "and I was greatly surprised that Hugh Fauld should ask your hand in marriage. He comes of a very good family—not so good as the Aftons, of course, and not so old, but infinitely higher than you had any right to look!"

"Why so, grandmother? Am I not an Afton, and therefore, according to your own showing, of a better family than his?"

Mrs. Afton took no notice of this question, proceeding—

"I have a plentiful store of household linen which I will divide with you, for you shall

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not go to Hugh Fauld a beggar, and Alick will give you two hundred pounds as a dowry. He agreed to do so when I mentioned the matter to him last evening. Everything can be got ready within a fortnight, including a new wardrobe for you, and Hugh says his house shall be newly-furnished to receive you. That is very generous of him!"

"You talk very mysteriously, grandmother," said the girl, her blue eyes flashing. "I consider myself just as good as Hugh Fauld, and I won't marry him to be looked down upon by him. I should have thought you would have had too much pride to allow him to speak so condescendingly of your granddaughter—an Afton, too!"

Mrs. Afton expressed her astonishment at this rebellious speech, adding—

"I know the cause of your conduct, Natalie. Hugh has told me of the attentions paid by that young fellow who came to the village last summer and took a cottage below the Grange. He met you down by the brook and elsewhere, and made you think he loved you!"

Natalie bowed her head, that her relative might not notice her paleness, and the old woman continued—

"I only knew of the young man after he had gone, but Hugh says you were often with him. He was a gentleman and kept a manservant, and Hugh thinks he might have been a baronet, from the airs he put on, speaking to no one in the village and visiting nowhere. He wanted no good of you, Natalie, you may depend!"

"And why not?" asked the girl, defiantly, lifting her head proudly. "He was a gentleman, and nothing more, and am I so much less than he?"

The old woman bowed significantly.

"Then an Afton is nobody, and your pride goes for nothing, grandmother!" said Natalie, a scarlet flush burning uneasily upon her clear cheeks. "You can tell Hugh Fauld, if you will be so kind, that I am very much indebted to him for his espionage, which I never suspected. Please tell him, too, that I decline to marry him!"

"Decline! Natalie!" gasped her relative.

"Yes, I decline his offer. I have no right to listen to it," added the young girl, almost inaudibly.

Her words brought upon her a storm of abuse from Mrs. Afton, who could hardly comprehend that she was in earnest in her refusal of the eligible offer she had just received.

Natalie persisted in her declarations, however, speaking so quietly and determinedly that her grandmother became alarmed, and exclaimed—

"You have no right, you wilful girl, to throw away this chance for us to recover our lost ground in the county. If you were Hugh Fauld's wife, Alick and I could hold up our heads once more, and the past would be forgotten. If Hugh Fauld shows us honour by marrying you, every family hereabouts will follow suit. If you refuse him, to be made sport of by some gentleman, we shall only be plunged deeper into disgrace than now."

"Be kind enough to explain yourself, grandmother," said Natalie, with dignity. "What do you mean by disgrace, and how can my refusal of Mr. Fauld affect our social position?"

Mrs. Afton hesitated a moment, and then said, grimly—

"Since you will know, you shall! The story is known to all the neighbours, and when I shall have told it you, you may be glad to marry our neighbour. My daughter, Amy Afton, was your mother, but she never wore a wedding-ring!"

Natalie grew pale as death, and sprang to her feet, regarding her relative with a terrified look.

"I know better," she said, in a choking voice. "I have dreamed of her all my life as pure and good, and I know she was!"

The lines about the old woman's face did

not relax, as she listened to this plea of the daughter for her mother, and she resumed—

"Amy was my only daughter, younger than Alick, who adored her. She was the belle of the neighbouring county, in our circle of society, and even the gentry used to take notice of her and compliment her dark eyes and hair. You did not get your fair looks from her, Natalie. They probably came from your father, whom I never saw. We were very proud of her, and Hugh Fauld loved her. Well, to make a long story short, one day, after her father's death—happily it wasn't before—our Amy fled from her home, leaving a note behind her, saying she was gone away to marry a great gentleman, and to be made a lady!"

"And did you never hear from her afterwards?"

"Oh, yes, although I never wished to. She had disgraced our family, and I could only wish she had died in her childhood. She wrote us twice, once to say that she had been married immediately to her lover, who wished to keep the affair secret for a year or two, partly on account of family reasons, and partly because she was not sufficiently well-educated to do honour to his name. She told us she was learning all the accomplishments under masters, and that she could already dance and speak French with any in the land!"

"And the second letter?"

"The second letter told us that a child was born to her, within a year of her marriage, and that its father intended to acknowledge the union very soon. But the months slipped away, another year went, and Amy came home to us with you in her arms, telling us only that her husband was dead, and that she had no proofs of her marriage. That was all she told us. I could have no patience with her, and Alick upbraided her, so she stayed in her

own room all the time, seeing no one, yet acting as if she had a right to mourn for the wretch who had deceived her. We hardly knew she was ailing till she died, when she had been home nearly a year!"

"My poor mother!" murmured Natalie.

"Till Amy fled our name was unblemished. As she tarnished it, her daughter should do her best to restore it. This can be done only by your marriage with Hugh Fauld!"

"But I cannot marry him, grandmother!"

"Why not?"

"I do not love him!"

"Is there any other reason?"

Natalie quailed before the stern look of her grandparent; then, endeavouring to speak calmly, she answered in the affirmative.

"What is it? Speak, girl. I will know!"

"Because—because—I am already married!" Mrs. Afton looked amazed and indignant, and then groaned.

"To whom?" she asked.

"I cannot tell you, grandmother. I am bound by a promise to keep the secret till my husband gives me liberty to reveal it."

The young girl spoke with conscious innocence and rectitude, her cheeks neither flushing nor paling before the accusing glances of her incensed relative.

"Like another, like child!" groaned Mrs. Afton. "I have warmed a viper which has turned to sting me. What have I ever done that I should be disgraced by my daughter, and by my daughter's daughter?"

To this outburst of selfish feeling Natalie replied—

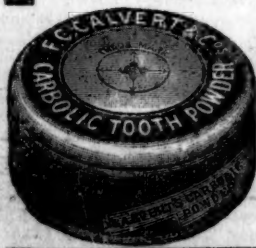
"What care did you ever bestow upon me, grandmother? I never received a tender word and caress from you. You never talked with me so long as you have done to-day. You have always treated me as an inferior, whose presence you merely tolerated in your house. And Uncle Alick has followed your example. I

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As soon as they have a tooth brush.



Remember that your Health is materially affected by Digestion, which depends largely on the Teeth performing their proper duties. Calvert's Carbolic Tooth Powder has the largest sale of any dentifrice.

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could not make my friends among the servants; and my heart cried out for affection. When it came to me then, with loving words, could I coldly pass it by? Could I reject it? No, grandmother, I have learned to love in return as I am loved. You have never concerned yourself with my movements, and I knew you would never grieve at my want of confidence in you!"

The girl spoke rapidly and impetuously, with glowing eyes and cheeks, and her words sounded like the bitterest of accusations to her grandmother, who grew but the more incensed.

"Married!" cried Mrs. Afton, scornfully. "You married? With the stain on your name, who would marry you? Why no one knows who your father was! I tell you your mother's story is repeated by you, and her fate will be yours! There is no ring upon your finger, and you have sworn not to tell the name of your husband! A likely story! And the old woman sneered.

Natalie was on the point of replying, when she heard the click of the garden gate, and said, instead—

"There is Hugh Fauld, grandmother, come for his answer. You can settle the matter with him!"

Unheeding Mrs. Afton's command to remain, she glided out of the room, as her rejected suitor ascended the steps, caught up her hat from the nail on which she had deposited it in entering the drawing-room, and hurriedly left the house.

(To be continued next week.)

Facetiæ

"SHE waved her umbrella and caught his eye," said Hawkins. "Did it put the eye out?" asked Smithers, who had seen women waving umbrellas before.

In order that a love letter may be what it should be, one should begin it without knowing what he is going to say, and end it without knowing what he has said.

"How beautiful and rosy white Miss Peacham looks to-night," "She does, but still, I don't take to her," "Why?" "I think she's sailing under false colours."

CHARLIE (to artist): "Don't you think that modern table is out of place in an ancient picture?" Painter of the picture: "They had modern tables in them days as well as now."

"MR. LEIPUT," said the landlady to the new boarder, "do you wish to have your eggs for breakfast in any particular way?" "Yes, madam," he replied, "I prefer them fresh."

CAPTAIN STAYSAIL: "Yes, madam, the needle of the compass always points to the north." Miss Sweetthing: "How interesting! But suppose you wanted to go south!"

"WILLIE," said the visitor, "what is your ambition?" "I like," said the boy, putting down his yellow covered story of the plains, "to have people tremble like leaves at the mere mention of my name."

"It seems to me," remarked the customer, as she watched the man at the market trim the slice of ham she had bought, "you are wasting a good deal of that meat." "Not at all, madam," he said, genially; "I weighed it first."

"PA, who was Shylock?" "Great good-nees, boy! You attend church and Sunday-school every week and don't know who Shylock was?" cried his father, with a look of surprise and horror. "Go and read your Bible, sir!"

MR. HENPECK—"You appear to be more than usually upset this morning, Caroline. What is the matter, love?" Mrs. Henpeck (severely): "Matter enough! You made so much noise walking with the baby last night that it was next to impossible for me to sleep."

"THAT stranger is Bluidskadwaxski, the Russian. He has made a name for himself." "Has he? Well, he must be a talented man if he made the one he now has."

"I'm so grateful to Mr. Chumpleigh for sending me his photograph." "Why, I thought you hated him." "Yes, but just think, he might have brought it."

SMITH: "I hear that Simpkins has just got a pension. He never saw any service, did he?" Tompkins: "No; he lost his voice urging his neighbours to go to the front."

"Do you think you could be happy with a man like me?" asked Willie Wishington, earnestly. "Oh, yes," answered Miss Cayenne, after a pause; "I think so—if he wasn't too much like you."

HIS HONOUR the Mayor: "Why do you transfer every once in a while so many of your men to the suburbs?" Police Commissioner: "We believe in the old adage: 'Too many cooks spoil the policeman.'"

HE: "What allowance do you think your father ought to make us when we are married?" SHE: "Well, if he makes allowance for your faults, I think he will be doing all that can be expected of him."

SHE: "Why, Charley, where have you been? I've been waiting an age for you." HE: "Oh, but then your age is such a brief time, you know." She is more than ever of the opinion that Charley is such a dear fellow.

JINKS: "Well, I see the French didn't succeed in hissing down the Wagner opera."

WINKS: "Of course not. Nothing less than a thunder storm or a dynamite explosion can down Wagner after the orchestra gets its second wind."

"WOMEN'S rights!" exclaimed a man when the subject was broached. "What more do they want? My wife bosses me, our daughters bosses us both, and the servant-girl bosses the whole family. It's time the men were allowed some rights."

"Come, come, children," interrupted the superintendent, tapping his little bell. "That's no way to sing 'I want to be an angel.' Sing it as if you meant it. Now!" But they sang it with no more expression than before. Children are peculiar.

CHEF: "There ought to be some way to work off our cold meats." Proprietor: "Why not make hash of it?" Chef: "Our customers are a trifle above hash, you must remember." Proprietor: "Oh, well, get ten cents a plate for it and call it unassembled croquettes."

"So you have got twins at your house?" said Mrs. Bezumbe to little Johnny. "Yes, ma'am, two of 'em." "What are you going to call them?" "Thunder and Lightning." "Why, those are strange names to call children." "Well, that's what pa called 'em as soon as he heard they were in the house."

"How do you do, Mary? I've been trying to catch up with you for the last half-hour." "How did you know it was I?" "Oh, I knew you just as soon as I set eyes on that bonnet. I've known it as long as I can remember." It is such remarks as this that fill the female heart with bitterness.

"Don't you think that if I had lived in the days of old I would have made a good knight?" asked the young man who had been talking ancient history from eight to twelve in the evening. "I don't care so much what you would have made then," wearily observed the young lady, "but you might see what kind of a good-night you can make right now."

"ARE you a detective?" asked Mr. Meek-ton. "I am," answered the man with the turn-down collar and the white necktie. "Well, I want to employ you. I want you to get out your false whiskers and your dark lantern, and dog my footsteps night and day. Henrietta's gone out of town to visit some relatives, and I don't want her to be obliged to take my word for anything."

THE young pullet who lays her first egg no doubt imagines the case is unique in the world's history.

MR. SAPHRAID (during the honeymoon): "When did my little ducky darling first discover that she loved me?" Bride (sweetly): "When I found myself getting mad every time anyone called you a fool."

MR. KIDDER: "People say that it is impossible to find a needle in a haystack—but they're wrong."—Mrs. Kidder: "How would you go about it?"—Mr. Kidder: "Why? Walk over the haystacks barefooted."

JOHNNY: "Mamma, let's play I am your mother and you are my little boy." Mamma: "Very well, dear. How shall we play it?" Johnny: "I'll tell you. You start to do something, and I'll tell you not to."

MRS. JILSON: "I can't understand it. Since my husband bought his automobile he wears out his shoes in half the time he used to." Bent: "You don't understand because you do not accompany your husband on his auto tours."

MOSES: "How did you make your fortune?" Levi: "By horse-racing." Moses: "Not betting?" Levi: "No. I started a pawnshop just outside the racetrack for the use of the people who wanted to go home when the races were over."

MRS. HENPECK: "I read this morning about a man who was arrested twenty minutes after his wedding, and sent to prison for fifteen years. Isn't that awful?" Mr. Henpeck: "Oh, I don't know. The law doesn't compel him to take his wife to prison with him, does it?"

A YOUNG man conducted two ladies to an observatory to see an eclipse of the moon. They were too late; the eclipse was over, and the ladies were disappointed. "Oh," exclaimed our hero, "don't fret! I know the astronomer well. He is a very polite man, and I'm sure he will begin again."

MAGISTRATE: "You are accused of striking a drowning man a fatal blow with a hammer." Prisoner: "O! was tryin' to save his life, y'r honour. Sure didn't Oi schwim out to help him?" "But you took a hammer along and killed him with it." "Yis, sor. If ye don't kill 'em they'll grab ye ivery toime, y'r honour."

JEWELLER: "Diamond shirt studs? Yes, sir; here's a set, neat little stones, for one hundred and twenty-five dollars." Customer: "Huh! Our home in California I can get—." Jeweller: "Ah! yes, pardon me, here you are. Just look at these big flashes. Three carats each! Sell you that set for three dollars and fifty cents."

INSURANCE Adjuster: "Don't you think you have placed a rather high estimate upon the articles destroyed? Your total is twelve hundred dollars. Now, I'm pretty well convinced the entire lot could be duplicated for less than a quarter of that sum." Policy Holder: "I gave you just what the things cost, not a cent more. I bought them all at our last church fair."

MRS. NURICH: "Mrs. Betterdaze told me she was going to send her boy to you for a job." Mr. Nurich: "Yes, she sent him, and I turned him down proper. You'd oughter seen the high-handed letter she sent with him; said she sent him to me because he must have work of some kind, even if he had to work for a mere pittance." The nerve of her, callin' me names like that!

CONJURER (pointing to a large open cabinet): "Now, ladies and gentlemen, we come to the last item on the programme. I will ask any lady in the company to step on the platform and get into this cabinet. I will then shut the door. When I open it again the lady will have disappeared without leaving a trace." Gentleman (aside, to his wife): "I say, Matilda, you do me the favour and walk up."

Helpful Talks

BY THE EDITOR.

The Editor is pleased to hear from his readers at any time.

All letters must give the name and address of the writers, not for publication but as a guarantee of good faith.

POST WINE.—Vinegar and salt remove wine stains.

TOWNS.—First or second cousins may legally marry.

SISTER-IN-LAW.—Marriage is not legal with a deceased wife's sister.

RECIPIENT.—All receipts for £2 and upward must bear a penny stamp.

BASSO PROFUNDO.—If the man is a true bass he cannot possibly sing contralto.

JOTUN.—A domestic servant is entitled to receive, and must give, one month's notice.

E. N.—A notice may be delivered by hand, or by word of mouth, or by post. When the notice has expired the rent may be doubled. The length of notice depends on the nature of the tenancy.

INNOCEUCE.—A doctoon is a silver coin in circulation in Venice and Holland. It is worth in English currency from four to five shillings. The word is pronounced as if spelt duk-a-toon, the accent on the last syllable.

MADENING.—Anyone may inspect a will by paying the usual fees; but the private papers, bank-books, etc., of the deceased are not open to inspection except by the executor and the legal representatives of the deceased.

JOHN'S DARLING.—Sand soap is excellent for the hands of all persons engaged in manual labour. It is made by shaving down and melting some white soap, and then stirring into it, while warm, an equal quantity of fine sea sand. Put it, warm, into square moulds, or roll portions of the mixture between the hands, so as to form balls. Set them in a dark place to dry gradually.

SCIENCE.—The great movements in science and commerce, which have so flooded the world with knowledge and wealth within the last two centuries, began soon after Gutenberg's invention of the art of printing, in the year 1438. An array of splendid men came onto the world's arena about that year and during the next seventy-five years, such as has not been seen since. Among them were Henry IV. of France, Luther, Columbus, William the Silent, Copernicus, Shakespeare, Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Francis Drake, Lord Bacon, and scores of others, renowned in science, war, commerce, and religion. If you will read history carefully, you will see that nature produces men as she does fruit—now and then a first-class and bounteous crop, which is followed by many seasons of ordinary fruitage.

BOLINGBROKE.—A grape shot is made of several small cast-iron balls, so fastened together that they may be loaded in a gun all at once. The firing of the gun bursts the plates apart, and the balls scatter as soon as they leave the gun. A canister shot is made up of a sheet-iron or tin can filled with small iron or lead balls, the spaces between them being usually packed with sawdust. The canister bursts as soon as it leaves the gun, and the balls are thus scattered and do great execution among large masses of men. A shrapnel shot is made up of a cast-iron shell filled with musket balls, into which melted sulphur or resin is poured so as to fill up all the spaces between. This hardens and makes the balls into a solid mass. A hole is then bored down through the sulphur, and bullets of a size just large enough to hold gunpowder enough to burst the shell, by means of a fuse lighted when the gun is fired, which gun may be smooth-bored or rifled.

JURY.—The first private execution in England took place August, 1863.

S. L.—Annuities granted to members of the Royal Family are granted for life.

WRATHFUL.—It is useless to summon a child for accidentally breaking a window.

DAN.—If there was no agreement, you are bound by the custom of the place with others in your occupation.

SINGLETON.—When two sentences are to "run concurrently" they both begin and end on the same dates.

LAMBERT.—The translation of Nemo me impune (Latin) is "No one wounds me with impunity." It is the motto of Scotland. "Ye Victis" (Latin) is "Woe to the vanquished."

ART.—"Copyright" below a published picture means that the right to reproduce it for sale or profit is reserved by the owner of the copyright. Of course, you may copy any picture merely as an exercise or for amusement.

A YOUNG COUPLE.—There are several kinds of marriage licences. The total cost of marriage by licence before a registrar, together with cost of certificate, is £2 17s. 1d. Only one day's notice is required, but one or other of the contracting parties must have resided in the district for at least fifteen days immediately preceding the application for the licence.

HUMGRIFIN.—The bill for the abolition of negro slavery throughout the British dominions passed the House of Commons on August 7, the House of Lords on August 20, and received the royal assent—William IV.—on August 23, 1833. The day fixed for emancipation was August 1, 1834. In 1843 Great Britain emancipated more than 12,000,000 slaves in her East Indian possessions.

A LOVER OF SWEETS (Lambeth).—To make Everton toffee, take three pounds of the best brown sugar, and boil with one and one-half pints of water, until the candy will harden in cold water. Then add one half-pound of sweet-flavoured fresh butter, which will soften the candy. Boil a few minutes until it again hardens, and pour into trays. Flavour with lemon, if desired.

PRESTER.—The insect is the common "earwig," so-called, some said, because it was supposed to bore its way into people's ears. In reality, the name is "earwing," and the prongs at its tail, which look so formidable, are in fact only the combs with which the insect cleans its delicate wings. It lurks in cracks and crevices in wood, and under loose bark on trees. The "cure" for it is paraffin oil. Let your friend paint her wood-house with that, or drop some into cracks and crevices and paint along the wood with it close to the ground; the insects will not then ascend.

CURIOUS ONE.—Pills are not made by a "machine!" The material is kneaded up in a mortar, turned out on a small slab, flattened out like dough, then a roller is passed over the cake, which cuts it into long strips; these are individually taken and rolled into a round shape till they look like the thin stalks of black sugar sold by grocers; they are then laid upon another slab, which, instead of being flattened is crossed by a series of grooves; the roller being once more passed over the strip, the grooves cut it into pieces of pill size; the hand being passed over these they are rolled into round pill shape, and filled into the store canister.

KEARSLEY'S 30 YEARS' REPUTATION WIDOW WELCH'S FEMALE PILLS

Awarded Certificate of Merit for the cure of Irregularities, Amenities, and all Female Complaints. They have the approval of the Medical Profession. Beware of imitations. The only genuine and original are in *Widow Welch's* wrapper. Boxes, 2s. 6d. and 4s. 6d. of all Chemists. 4s. 6d. box contains three times the pills. Or by post 1s. or 3s. stamps, by the makers, G. and G. KEARSLEY, 17, North Street, Westminster. Sold in the Colonies.

ANXIOUS TO KNOW.—Of the many ways which are in common use for disinfecting rooms and houses, none so easily recommends itself to the senses and to common-sense as the coffee process. Upon a shovelful of red-hot coal throw a handful of ground coffee, and walk with it through the parts of the house where the foul smells exist or which you desire to disinfect. The volatilised essential oils of the coffee will instantly correct the evils, for they have the peculiar properties of deodorising and disinfecting at the same time.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR EYES

It is impossible to take too much care of one's eyes, and those who value their eyesight will do well to send to STEPHEN GREEN, 210, Lambeth Road, London, for a little book "How to Preserve the Eyesight," which tells the story of a cure for all troubles of the eyes, eyelashes, and eyelids. SINGLETON'S EYE OINTMENT has proved its virtues during 300 years, and it may be obtained of all chemists and stores in ancient pedestal pots for 2/- each.

EWS.

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A RELIABLE FORECAST of your Future in Love, Marriage, Business, etc. What I tell you comes true; send 1s. birthdate, and stamped self-addressed envelope to Q. EDWARDS, 2, Cursitor St., London, E.C.

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TELL YOUR COOK

To well sprinkle the floor near the fireplace and kitchen cupboard last thing at night with "KEATING'S POWDER" unrivalled killer of Fleas, Beetles, Moths. (Harmless to animals.) Sold everywhere, early in time, 3d., 6d. and 1/- each.

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IN DAILY USE

To be had of all Chemists in Boxes 1/3, 2/9 or 4/6 or sent anywhere on receipt of 15, 34 or 55 1/- Stamps by E. J. Towle & Co., 66, Long Row, Nottingham.

UNHAPPY LIZIE.—A term of imprisonment reckons from the first day of the assize at which the prisoner was convicted. Any time he may have been awaiting trial is taken into account before sentence is passed, but does not reckon as part of the sentence recorded.

JANE.—The public baths among the ancients consisted of a great number of apartments. Both hot and cold were generally comprised in the same building. The wealthy usually had baths in their own houses, but in the time of Augustus the public baths became very numerous, and were noted for their grandeur and magnificence. It is stated that at one period there were eight hundred public baths in Rome.

J. T.—If there is no will and no children, the widow is entitled to £500 out of the estate, and to her share of the residue. She can take out letters of administration. A son is liable to contribute to the support of his mother, chargeable to the parish, if he is able to do so. The question of ability is for the justice to decide, on summons.

BEAUTY.—For chapped hands it is a good thing when washing them to rub them thoroughly dry with a coarse towel. On retiring at night they should be well rubbed with either olive or almond oil, after which powdered chalk should be well rubbed in. This will not only prevent chapping, but will render the hands white and keep them so.

A FLIRT.—It is decidedly unladylike in any young woman to ape men's fashions, whether by having hair cut and "parted" like them, or wearing hats, coats, and "fronts" similar to theirs, or carrying walking-sticks, or wearing gaiters and shortening the skirts that they may be seen.

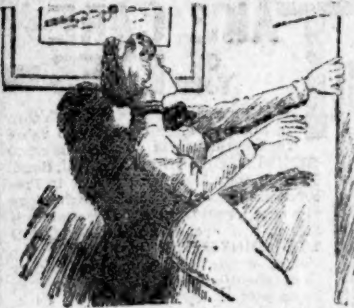
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* * We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.

Liver Trouble & CONSTIPATION

MRS. S. NICHOLLS, Edge Hill Lane, Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham, suffered for two years from liver troubles, constipation, and but recently was completely cured of both complaints. Interviewed by a *Birmingham Telegram* reporter with regard to this cure, Mrs. Nicholls said: "For two years I have been a dreadful sufferer from pains arising from liver complaint. They were the worst in my head, but I also had them across my sides, back, and shoulders. I used to have dizzy rounds, which made me feel very bad; indeed, I never felt well. In consequence of acute constipation, my sufferings were severe, and I had painful sensations across the region of my kidneys. I obtained some medicine from a doctor, but this did not give me any permanent relief. A short time back I saw a testimonial in a local paper from someone who had suffered worse than I did for years with liver complaint, and had been cured by Bile Beans for Biliousness. I determined to try Bile Beans, and sent for a box. The effect they had upon me was highly beneficial. The pains gradually ceased, and the attacks of giddiness became less frequent. By persevering with the Beans the constipation has now entirely left me. I am also cured of the liver complaint, and am glad to say that I now enjoy good health." "Would you recommend Bile Beans to other sufferers?" queried the reporter. "Indeed I would. Bile Beans have done me such a great deal of good that I can recommend them to anyone suffering as I did. You can make what use you like of these few facts, for I should like others besides myself to benefit by the use of Bile Beans."



"I used to have dizzy rounds."

the bowels, curing or preventing constipation, cleansing the stomach, and ridding the system of all impurities.

Do not be misled by claims of half a hundred pills in the box where probably four to six constitutes a dose, and the dose cannot be discontinued. One Bile Bean is one dose. They can be discontinued after the cure is effected; they are purely vegetable; they do not contain any harmful drugs, and they are the safest family medicine.

BILE BEANS FOR BILIOUSNESS are a certain cure for Headache, Constipation, Piles, Liver Trouble, Bad Breath, Liver Chill, Indigestion, Flatulence, Dizziness, Buzzing in the Head, Debility, Pimples, Blood Impurities, Spring Ailments, Anaemia, and all Female Ailments. Of all medicine vendors, 1/6 and 2/6 per box (large box contains three times quantity small size).

Bile Beans for Biliousness are the product of modern scientific research, and therefore thoroughly up-to-date. They do not merely purge, giving temporary relief only, and leaving the patient weakened, like the out-of-date so-called remedies of forty or fifty years ago, which contain, probably, aloe, mercury, and other harmful drugs. Bile Beans without the slightest discomfort prompt the liver and digestive organs to act in nature's normal way, leaving those organs strengthened and stimulated to continue the performance of their duties without further assistance. They produce a gentle action on

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SULPHOLINE SHILLING BOTTLES

A SPOTLESS SKIN.
A BEAUTIFUL COMPLEXION.
ERUPTIONS, PIMPLES
ENTIRELY FADE AWAY.

LOTION PEPPER'S TONIC

Promotes Appetite.

CURES DYSPEPSIA, HYSTERIA, NERVOUS COMPLAINTS.

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MORE
CHAPS.

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NO
MORE
ROUGH
HANDS.



IS UNEQUALLED FOR PRESERVING
THE SKIN AND COMPLEXION

FROM THE EFFECTS OF
FROST, COLD WINDS, & HARD WATER.

IT REMOVES AND PREVENTS ALL

Roughness, Redness, & Chaps.

AND KEEPS THE SKIN

SOFT, SMOOTH & WHITE
AT ALL SEASONS.

If used after Dancing, or visiting heated apartments,
it will be found DELIGHTFULLY COOLING AND
REFRESHING.

Bottles, 6d., 1s., and 2s. 6d., of all Chemists.
M. BEETHAM & SON, Cheltenham.